

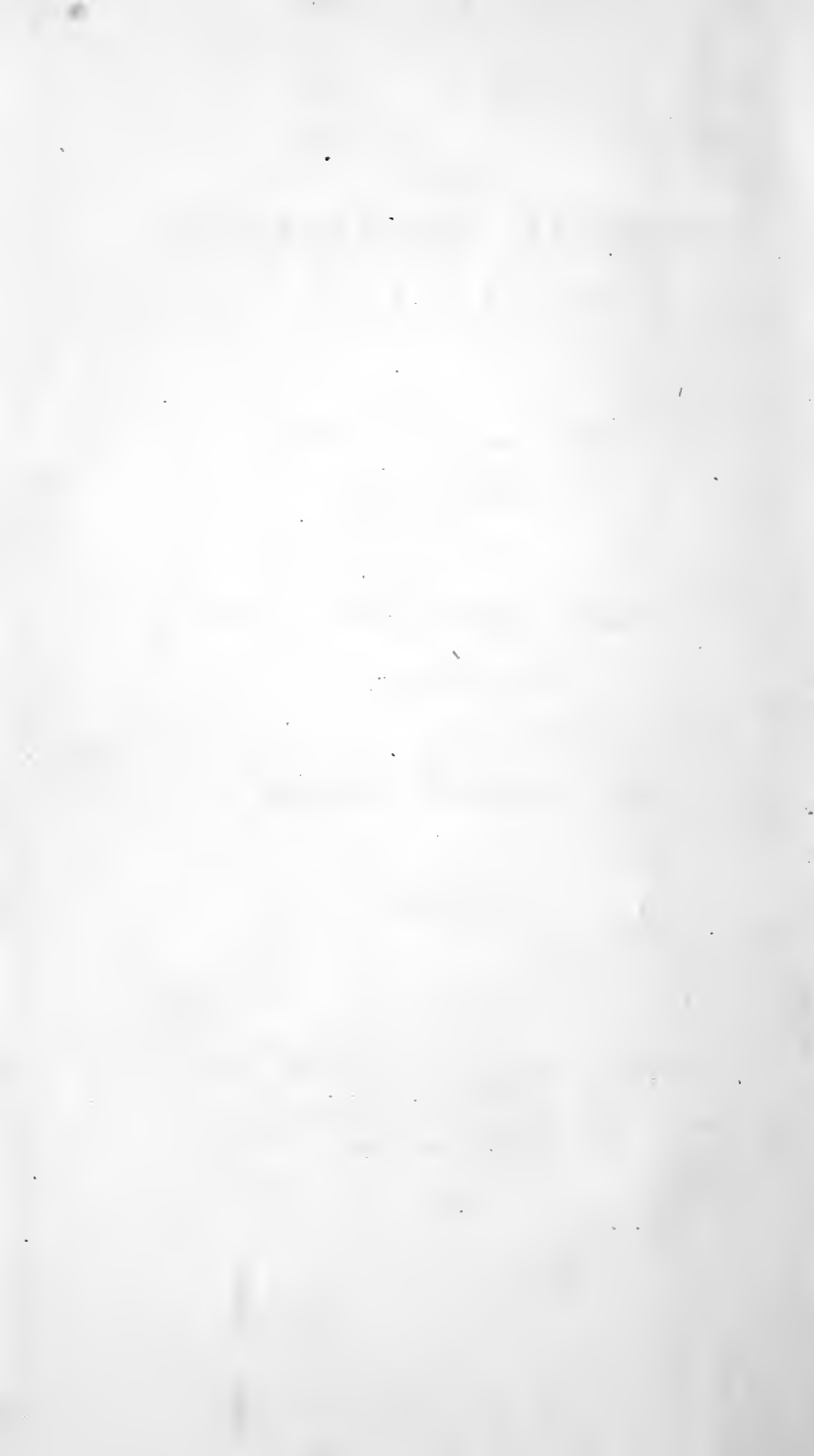
Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No.

5CC
8114





THE
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION
CONTROVERSY,

CONSIDERED IN
FIVE LECTURES

DELIVERED IN 1843,

AT THE
NEW SCHOOL ROOMS, QUEEN STREET,
WOOLWICH,


BY THE
REV. CHARLES STOVEL.

Second Edition.

LONDON :
HOULSTON & STONEMAN, AND DYER & CO.,
PATERNOSTER ROW ;
ROBERT GLADDING, WHITECHAPEL ROAD ; AND JAMES BLACK,
AND E. JONES, WOOLWICH.

1843.





P R E F A C E.

SCARCELY another subject can be found so decidedly influential on religious society, in the present age, as this of Baptismal Regeneration. By the wide separation between Romanists and Protestants, the latter, since the reformation, have appeared, to themselves at least, free from this elementary dogma of the former. The last few years have brought to light much that has a tendency to diminish this self-esteem ; and to urge, on all who love the truth, a careful revision of prevalent systems by a calm, and direct appeal to the New Testament. By this means it is thought that all parties will best attain the conformity to divine law, which each professes to seek ; and so far only, as their conformity to divine law is attained, will their unity and usefulness be realised.

By the publication of the Oxford Tracts, greater results have been produced than were at first expected. However individuals might have felt the force of their statements, the popularity of their style, and their suitability for extensive circulation, no one seemed to anticipate that, in ten years, one-third part of the national clergy would have been brought over to the views of their authors ; and

that the sentiments they contain would have gained so firm a hold, as they now have, upon the public mind. The effort was at first derided as a production of weakness made frantic with alarm, but it has found in society, elements on which the party has increased its strength, until Papists are rejoicing in the approximation which is now made to their views; the Bishop of London has hung out the lure to re-union with Rome; and, even in the Senate, it is gravely whispered that Romanist Clergymen must be admitted to share in the National Church Endowments of Ireland.

One great cause of this rapid advance of Tractarianism and Popery, is explained by the celebrated sermon of Dr. Pusey, delivered in Oxford Cathedral "on the fourth Sunday after Easter," in the present year. His suspension on account of its sentiments is only a farce, for his turn to preach in the Cathedral again could scarcely have arrived, in a shorter time than that which is assigned for his silence; but his defence in the publication of his sermon, is of great moment. It has brought out the "*opus operatum*," as held in the Church of England, so clearly, that this discourse might easily be read, without any offence, from the oratory by a Roman Catholic Priest; and, the quotations which Dr. Pusey has collected from high authorities in the English hierarchy, are so clear and so much to the point, that no other document is required to show that in leaving Rome, the English Establish-

ment has retained the infection of her moral pestilence. It is this which has formed both the cause and the nourishment of Tractarianism. It found the mass of society prepared for its reception. Beneath our Protestantism so much of popery has been concealed, that nothing was required but a decided advocacy to call it into operation. This it has found in the Tractmen of Oxford; and their success is only what, if the circumstances had been known, every one might have anticipated.

Another cause of their success will be found in the treatment which the Tractmen have received. In some cases, they have been charged with errors which they do not hold; in other cases, they have been answered by ridicule; in others, they have been met by statements respecting the ancient fathers which cannot be sustained; and the Holy Scriptures have been subjected to the grossest violence, that other parties might escape the far more accurate criticisms of Oxford. It is easy to see that such means, when employed in the defence of truth, can only confer an augmented strength on the error to be resisted. The champions of personal religion have, in noisy vehemence, slashed at the iron buckler of its adversary with swords of glass. The tinkling of their broken weapons has been misinterpreted for the sound of victory, when, in truth, the object of their solicitude has been more dangerously exposed to the enemy by their rashness. From these ineffectual resistances of their error, the Tractmen

have derived more advantage than could have been otherwise obtained by their utmost activity.

Whether these mistakes have been avoided in these Lectures, the candid reader will decide. They were called for, as will be seen, by local activities in favour of Baptismal Regeneration : which, by including the first principle of the Tractarian heresy, sustains the whole strength of that system. The efforts made in Woolwich differ, in nothing material, from those which are made in almost every diocese throughout England. The parties who became involved in this controversy there, have nothing in their views to diminish the general interest and usefulness of the discussion. The principal object has been, to determine whether the Sacramental benefits ascribed, by Dr. Pusey and the Tractmen, to infant baptism, and promiscuous baptism, can be supported by the Holy Scriptures, to which they appeal : but the appeal which they have made to scripture, in favour of a supposed “ spiritual gift in baptism,” brings into serious doubt the validity of their baptism itself. One of these questions could not be settled without the other ; and, since the whole system of the Tractmen must stand or fall as these two questions are affirmed or denied, both have been considered in these exercises, I hope, with fairness, but certainly with an earnest desire to ascertain, and to diffuse the truth.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
PREFACE	iii

LECTURE I.

ON THE PARTIES IMPLICATED—THE QUESTION IN DIS- PUTE, AND ITS RELATION TO MATTERS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE	1
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

LECTURE II.

ON THE RISE AND SPREAD OF BAPTISMAL REGENERA- TION, AND ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS	41
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

LECTURE III.

ON THE SUPPORT WHICH BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, AND ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS, ARE SUPPOSED TO DERIVE FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE.	88
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

LECTURE IV.

ON THE INJURY DONE TO TRUE RELIGION BY THE ADVOCACY OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, AND ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS	141
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

LECTURE V.

ON THE ADVANTAGES DERIVED TO PERSONAL RELIGION FROM A STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE SCRIPTURAL RULE OF BAPTIZING ACCREDITED BELIEVERS ONLY	182
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

	PAGE.
NOTES.	
1. ON THE "OPUS OPERATUM"	217
2. ON THE CHARLINCH REVIVAL	218
3. ON VALENTINE THE HERETIC	219
4. ON THE COINCIDENCE BETWEEN THE TRACTMEN AND VALENTINE	219
5. ON THE EVIDENCE OF CYPRIAN	221
6. ON THE ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES	222
7. ON THE THEORY OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCH AND DR. CHALMERS	222
8. ON THE REGISTRATION ACT	224
9. ON THE NEW MARRIAGE LAW, AND THE BISHOP OF LONDON	226
10. ON THE SABIAN HERESY, AND JOHN'S BAPTISM	228
11. ON THE CASE OF THE INDEPENDENTS	228
12. ON THE CASE OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHMEN	229
13. ON THE PRESENT DUTY OF BAPTIST CHURCHES	230



LECTURE I.

ON THE PARTIES IMPLICATED—THE QUESTION IN DISPUTE
—AND ITS RELATION TO MATTERS OF THE GREATEST
IMPORTANCE.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, your attention has recently been directed to the subject of Baptismal Regeneration, through the publishing of a pamphlet, by the Reverend Capel Molyneux, and of two others in reply,—one by “Aquila,” and the other by “Presbyter.”—The first tract, as you are aware, denies the doctrine in question, as being contrary to the standards of the Church of England, and the obvious dictates of Holy Scripture ; while the other two tracts that I have named, appealing to the same authorities, affirm and defend it.

These publications have already awakened great interest in your town ; and both from their kindly spirit, for the most part, and from their contents, it is hoped, that they will, under the guidance of an all-wise and special Providence, lead to no ordinary or unimportant results. For, while the tracts contain in themselves much to instruct, they also yield this advantage, that by awakening the attention of an inquiring people, the advance of their investigations towards the truth, if not to it, cannot now be prevented.

Some friends resident in your own vicinity, and (let me add) deeply concerned for your spiritual and ever-

lasting welfare, felt that their duty, as baptized believers, would by no means have been performed, at such a crisis, if what little effort lay within their power had been withheld from this important investigation. They have, therefore, requested me to undertake the exercises on which we are now to enter. But though it appeared right for me to concede what they desire, it must not be supposed, that any unfair advantage is to be taken of incidents which must be unpleasant to some, and may, perhaps, lead to other things equally to be regretted. Rather than this, I would draw a curtain round the scene of conflict, and hide from general view whatever might happen to be unseemly. For, though such discussions are often absolutely needful in the cause of truth, (since wherever differences of opinion come to exist, there must be mutual inquiry and discussion, in order that we may satisfactorily know which opinion is the right and which the wrong ;) yet, indispensable as the discharge of this Christian duty may be, its performance is almost always accompanied with marks of human imperfection. Indeed it is scarcely possible in such undertakings, so to watch and guard the fiery emotions of the heart, as to keep them always under the strict control which Christian charity dictates. I wish, therefore, to take no advantage of any such circumstances whatever. I would rather hide than expose them. But the parties engaged in this discussion need not to be informed by me, that they are not the only persons who are interested in it, nor that theirs are not the only, or the principal interests at stake. "Presbyter" in his preface states, and most justly, that "all men are equally concerned in so important a question as the doctrine of *Regeneration*."

This is perfectly correct, and therefore the affirmation, that it takes place in baptism, involves the interests of mankind at large ; and I may add, that it implicates the honour of God to his Church, together with the integrity and character of the Church, as she appeals to the world. It affects also the special and personal application of the only remedy, whereby the multifarious evils which sin hath inflicted upon our species may be removed, so that those who have suffered them may be healed and saved. Our native country, moreover, (at whose name every patriotic spirit ought to glow,) in this question demands more than ordinary solicitude ; for this dogma hath spread itself over the whole range of our dominions. Subtle as the miasma of a pestilence, it has penetrated the dense population of our large towns, and it settles upon our rural districts like the mildew of nature. Adapted to every kind of taste, and to every condition of man, it presents itself with an almost incredible flexibility, bending round, and entering into the constitution and form of human beings, like the air we breathe. Now it combines with the decorations of royalty, and then it is seen in the humblest walks of life ; it is borne on every breeze to our distant colonies, and it is urged by solemn appeals to the word of God, and to the eternal judgment. By such appeals its advocates urge it upon us. They demand our faith in its benefits, and our obedience to the rite is thus required ; we therefore are made responsible parties, and are concerned in the discussion ; first, indeed, for *ourselves*, that we may show with what reason we admit or refuse it ; and, secondly, for *posterity*, which is likely to be exposed to its progressive influence. For, if our views be right, this theory

is undermining the whole fabric of gospel truth, and shaking it from beneath as with the power of an earthquake, disjoining its parts, and crumbling the whole structure into ruin. We believe that its advocates are, with heavy strokes, laying their axe to the most vital root of all personal godliness and piety. If it be affirmed that we are wrong in these apprehensions, we have a right to claim instruction and an answer to our objections ; for the salvation of our souls is precious, and it must cease for ever. But until it be proved that we are wrong, we are bound to speak in the cause of our God, and the common Christianity. The brethren have, therefore, ventured to request a prayerful attention to the following exercises. It is intended to pass over the whole field of inquiry, offering such suggestions as may enable you to appreciate justly the appeal to sacred scripture, which is now made in favour of the disputed doctrine. To do this is of the utmost moment to us all, that each one may observe the dictates of an enlightened conscience, determine thus for himself the path of duty, and walk therein with cheerful simplicity and confiding obedience.

These views accord with my own, and therefore I did not feel at liberty to decline this invitation of my brethren resident in your town. Yet, let it be observed, that the duty thus undertaken, by no means compels me to interfere with the private matters and internal affairs of the hierarchy in which this discussion has originated. Its officers and members must settle, among themselves, whatever they may find that calls for discipline and reproof within its own pale. It is only the question respecting the grace or benefit, supposed to be

connected with the baptism of infants and promiscuous baptism, with which I have to do. To this, therefore, in these exercises, your attention will be as much as possible confined. Reference must, of course, be made to the works which I have named, and in them some things may be found not altogether to be approved : but I wish to avoid everything like harsh or undue censure, and I shall shun studiously every interference not absolutely necessary to my purpose, or the protection of my character, with the discipline of a community from which I have most conscientiously retired, and from which I must, with my present views, be for ever separated.

Observing these rules of propriety, therefore, I may be allowed to clear myself from any supposed concurrence in one matter, which has been suggested in the publications of "Presbyter" and "Aquila," and which they have mutually backed and confirmed by a quotation from the sermons of the Rev. Mr. Melvill, of Camberwell. I refer now to the heavy charge of *perjury*, which is thus brought against your townsman and minister in Christ. If there be any good ground whatever, on which it can be rested and sustained, "a Church" professedly so perfect in its constitution, so apostolical in its origin, and so complete in its discipline, ought to have some other means of redress, more likely to reform the culprit, and less injurious to the public morals, than that which has been adopted in the case. To issue such an allegation from the press, under fictitious names, and before the supposed offender has been subjected to any Church discipline whatever ; while he is still officiating in the sanctuary, and administering the word of eternal life, in full authority in "the Church" of which they are

themselves members, ought, in my estimation, never to be allowed. I do sincerely hope that these authors will, for the credit of our common faith, withdraw that charge, or else withdraw themselves from the fellowship of "a Church," which, on their showing, tolerates in its ministers so base a crime.

To esteem that gentleman highly, at least for the feelings of his heart, if not for the accuracy of his reasonings, it is necessary only to read the tract on this subject, issued by the Rev. Mr. Molyneux; and I cannot think it right that he should be charged with knowingly teaching one doctrine, if he has sworn to uphold another, which is exactly its opposite. Men differ respecting the true import of the Canons and Articles, framed by the Church of England, just as they do in their views respecting the import of sacred Scripture; and this fact will not only prove that such means are absolutely ineffectual for producing uniformity of sentiment in any body of men, but will lead to other conclusions not necessary for me to point out. Why then that heavy implication of personal character, which is advanced by "Aquila," in his 9th page? The words to which I refer, are these:—

"Whether the writer experienced the grace of conversion "*after* he had solemnly declared himself 'to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon himself' the sacred office of the Priesthood, and *after* he had solemnly sworn that he believed and would maintain the articles and doctrines of the Church, he alone can know; but this at least his book makes known, that he has not for any length of time, and certainly for 'no series of years' been accustom'd to move in the light of those glorious scriptural truths which the Church upholds."

The caution apparent in this language, I greatly dis-

like : it is by no means consistent with the occasion. The manner of conveying the insinuation, I disapprove still more highly. The criminality of the charge being so gross ought to command seriousness. Such a crime should never be hinted at, but with solemnity and decorum. If there be any just reason why an Ecclesiastical Court should be maintained in every diocese of this country ; I submit that such offences against propriety may form appropriate matter for their deliberation. Within the privacy of a Court, and under the solemnities of law, such a charge might be justly considered ; but to issue it from the press, in such language, and under a fictitious name, I think to be absolutely wrong, and altogether undignified. In such an act, I will not participate. I may in many particulars disapprove of that author's sentiments : but I will unite with no one to do him injustice, much less in advancing such an implication of his morals.

Guarding myself, therefore, against all supposition of approving either this or some other passages in the same tract, which are advanced in a way that, in my opinion, savours more of temper than of wit ; I shall endeavour, in this discourse, to explain three particulars : First, *the advantages afforded by your present position for urging this inquiry to some practical result.* I do this, presuming that there is not one amongst you, brethren, if I may venture to address you by that endearing term, who would dare to make these discussions mere pastime and entertainment, or turn the occasion into one for exhibiting strength and dexterity. But, hoping that you all feel the solemn responsibility under which you are laid, first to *know*, and then to *do* the will of God, I shall

unfold the mercy which is thus leading you to the accomplishment of these objects.

Secondly, I shall state *my own view of the matter under examination*, and I request your attention to this the more earnestly, because on this topic, more, perhaps, than on any other that comes within the range of our knowledge, obscurity of terms, misconceptions, and unjust imputations on either side, have tended so to darken the subject of inquiry, as to render a decision of the question absolutely impossible. Before ever you can decide upon the right or wrong of the case, you must understand precisely the point to be determined; and then you may consider the weight of the authority by which it is supported or condemned.

In the third place, I shall consider *the relation in which this theory stands to other questions of the greatest moment*. Hence we shall see the importance of the whole subject. The necessity for this is found in the conduct of those who advocate the doctrine in dispute. For by many, as soon as this question and the practice they wish to uphold are brought under discussion, the whole matter is rejected, as if unworthy of being attended to. By a very general consent it is then discarded as indifferent, and designated a "*non essential*;" although the practice is retained with the greatest firmness, and urged with extreme pertinacity; and although the sacrament, whose nature and use are to be explained, is by all acknowledged to be of Divine appointment. There is no consistency or propriety in this. Such a matter ought never to be regarded as unworthy of attention. The doctrine is not trivial, nor is it at present clearly understood: but you have advantages now, for prosecuting your inquiries to a

satisfactory termination ; and, that our responsibilities may be duly felt, these will occupy your first regard.

Amongst these advantages, I may name, first, *the spirit of inquiry which has already been awakened in your own minds*. It is not confined to you, but extends through the whole nation. I regard this altogether as a providential interference of Almighty God. By it attention is called to a momentous theme, and every man is bound to examine it for himself, “ to prove all things ” brought before him, and “ to hold fast that which is good,”—let me add, to hold fast *only* that which is *good*. Now is the time, brethren, if ever ; now especially is the time for you, “ as dear children to desire the sincere milk of “ the word, that you may grow thereby.” Such as are able to use the English version of sacred Scripture only, will, of course, lie under some disadvantage, and will therefore require the greater modesty and prayerful caution. Still you need not be discouraged. That version was made by parties, who advocated both Infant Baptism and the supposed grace of that ceremony ; and, by borrowing some Greek words and mistranslating others, they have facilitated the defence of those dogmas. Yet the truth of God is therein stated with such wisdom, that it cannot be concealed from those who seek it in sincerity, and are by Him enabled to rise above the prejudices of party and party feeling. At such a time as this too, when many minds are directed to the same subject, each one will see something which others are in danger of passing by. Hence, you may find in all the tracts that have been issued, something that will assist. “ Aquila ” will not be read in vain by any careful inquirer. “ Presbyter ” affords many important

helps, and the Rev. Capel Molyneux's publication, though it clearly contradicts itself, yet, nevertheless, from its spirit and contents, deserves both high respect and deep attention. The help which they afford, therefore, in this great inquiry should not be lost. Investigation ought to be, with prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit, pushed to a result; and if you will thus act in the case, sooner, perhaps, than you think, the light of heaven will shine upon your path, and cause you to rest in the law of your Redeemer. For, over every sincere inquirer, the teaching Spirit hovers with kindest sympathy; and to every one who desireth to *know* the will of God, it is said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Now, therefore, that the icy surface of fixed custom has been broken through, a mighty advantage has been gained. Seize that advantage, and your way is onward to a living peace.

A second advantage is given to you in *the common appeal made by all parties to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture*. On this point, "Aquila" is the least clear and determinate. His notion of "the Church" and her authority, involves a fearful approximation to the implicit faith of Popery. Yet he does, and he must, in common with all Catholics, appeal to Scripture as the authority on which his "Church" acts. The other writers do this more distinctly, and hereby the decision of the matter in dispute is greatly facilitated. For if any doctrine, pleaded for, be found contrary to Holy Scripture, and some still plead for its observance, because the Church enjoins it; the only question left is, shall we obey God or man? On this point, therefore, the whole question hangs. If any one, whether Papist or Protestant,

turn from the Divine Records, and appeal for support to tradition, to Jewish customs, to the diverse immersions and ceremonies which have been all done away; the obvious and conclusive answer is, *These are not our law*. The one great question which engrosses our solicitude is, "What saith the Scripture?" the inspired Scripture. To this you have appealed, and to this you must be brought. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 20.)

A third advantage will be found, in *the enlightened manner in which the appeal to Scripture has been made*. I am sorry, however, to make an exception here in the case of "Aquila." If he be an eagle, as his name imports, he does not seem to me to have built his nest upon that rock. An appeal is made by him to Scripture, it is true; and he must be judged at that tribunal. But he is less at home in making this appeal to Scripture, than when he would display his own dexterity and sarcasm. In these things he must be pitied and forgiven. But the other authors are far more dignified. The appeal to Scripture is made, by Mr. Molyneux, with a boldness and simplicity, not often observed in treating on this subject; and "Presbyter" has shown an approximation to accuracy, in his appeal to the Greek, which is still less frequently observed in this discussion. His distinction between the two Greek particles *εις into*, and *εν in*, as they are used in sentences which relate to Baptism, will lead a great way towards the settlement of this dispute. Ordinarily we have an extreme difficulty to be surmounted here. Men turn to the subject of Baptism, as to a *non-essential*; and then they leap with precipitancy from sup-

positions to conclusions, as though they could not bear to feel the importance of arriving with accuracy at the truth. The correction of this error here is of infinite importance, and cannot fail to produce a corresponding benefit.

You have also a fourth advantage in *the open and unqualified declaration, now made, of the subject in dispute*. This is of vast importance. The publication of the Oxford Tracts is by no means to be regretted. The same may be said of those produced in Woolwich, which are but echoes of the Oxford divines. I believe them to be just expositions of the doctrine of the English Church. It is best for everything, holden and urged as an object of faith, to be clearly and openly stated ; and on this matter, I have great pleasure in giving an unqualified praise to "Aquila." His words, in page 6 of his tract, are :

"My object in this respect will be accomplished, if I shall
 "enable any wavering Churchman to give a reason of the
 "hope that is in him, as resting upon a Baptismal Founda-
 "tion, which cannot be moved ; if I shall succeed in vindi-
 "cating our Lord from the implied charge of having im-
 "posed upon us a yoke of carnal ordinances ; and if I shall
 "convince any Christian parent that the expectation of a
 "spiritual gift in Baptism, to those whom the Lord Jesus
 "suffers to come unto Him, with no pre-requisite 'but
 "original sin and helpless innocency,' is not 'mere delusion
 "and utter folly,' but is founded upon that FIAT, DICTUM,
 "or WORD OF GOD (PHMA ΘΕΟΥ), which can never pass
 "away."

I may just observe, that this accumulation of learning, exhibited in the use of two Latin and two Greek words, signifies nothing more than that "Aquila" supposes this doctrine to rest upon the will of God, declared in

his written word, the Holy Scriptures. Of this opinion, we shall consider the accuracy in a subsequent discourse. But, there is one sentence which I cannot understand. Speaking of infants, he says, "*whom the Lord Jesus suffers to come unto him, with no pre-requisite but original sin and helpless innocence.*" How he makes helpless innocence and original sin to unite in the same persons, I am unable to explain. He will, perhaps, do this himself at some other time. But it is quite clear, that he, in plain words, avows the doctrine in dispute, while many others who hold it, or the same principle at least, will shudder at the terms by which it is properly expressed.

"Presbyter" is equally plain. He states the doctrine of his "Church" at page 123, in the following terms :

"Her doctrine is this, that all men are born in sin, or are sinful, and this sinfulness of nature remains not an inactive principle, but in every man breaks out into the commission of actual sin ; that Christ, the Son of God, having by his death made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, ordained a Sacrament by which the benefits of his death might, for the first time, be brought home to individuals ; that these benefits, thereby conveyed, consist of *remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost* ; by which last blessing the baptized party becomes *a child of God*, and is thereby entitled to an inheritance in the future and eternal kingdom of Heaven ; that this sonship binds the party by the most solemn and sacred ties to a constant compliance with all the holy requirements of the Gospel ; and that the attainment of eternal life will depend upon the Christian conforming himself thereto ; and, moreover, that one of the blessings of this Regeneration is, that the Holy Ghost takes up his abode in the baptized party, and is there ever and on all occasions, when sincerely and faithfully applied to, ready to exert His influence and to supply powers for the sanctification of the believer."

Here again everything is explicit—an appeal is made to Scripture to authorize and enforce our belief, and to justify our “expectation of a spiritual gift in baptism,” “by which the benefits of His (Christ’s) death” are “for the first time brought home to individuals.” This benefit of His death is also said to be “His atonement for the sins of the whole world ;” connected with, and resulting from this, is “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*, by which last blessing the baptized party becomes *a child of God*, and is thereby entitled to an inheritance in the future and eternal kingdom of Heaven.” The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration therefore is stated quite clearly, in the words of its own advocates ; and it is due to them to say, that this is the doctrine advocated by the Tractarians of Oxford. It is also, in my view, the clear and avowed doctrine of the Church of England. Nothing can be more demonstrable than the truth of this assertion. This doctrine is not only taught in the Articles, the Catechism, and the Ritual, but it is assumed in every form of prayer used in her worship. It is the means by which she labours to bring within her pale the population of the empire, and gives to her ministers of every grade, their official importance. I hail, therefore, as a providential benefit, as an advantage to the lovers of truth, that the doctrine on which the whole policy of the Church of England rests, should be thus openly avowed and discussed by her own ministers.

With all these advantages, therefore, and by the decision of a minister of your own town, who is also a minister in “the Church,” which is built upon this very dogma, you are now called upon solemnly to investigate this Baptismal Regeneration. Mr. Molyneux has

solemnly repudiated it, as, in his opinion, being absolutely contradictory to the standards of the Church of England. In this part of his argument, I believe that he has entirely failed. Here "Aquila" and "Presbyter" have the advantage over him completely ; and their argument for the Church stands unanswerable, in the face of all his allegations, and his whole theory of explanation. But Mr. Molyneux has also affirmed, as a farther reason for rejecting it, that this doctrine is contrary to Holy Scripture, and fatal to the spiritual interests of mankind. I join him in this, hand and heart. To me, he seems perfectly right in declaring that it is opposed to the word of Almighty God, to the hope of salvation, and to all the interests of personal piety ; though he is *not* right in saying that it is opposed to the Articles and Ritual of the Church of England. In stating his objection to this dogma, however, Mr. Molyneux originates a question altogether new. As far as my knowledge extends, it has not been advanced by any other, at least not in the same form and expression. After contending that the Church baptizes *none but believers*, he affirms, in his 39th page, first, that she, in the case of infants, takes "the proxy for the principal;" that is to say, the promise of the sponsors is taken for the faith of the child, And, farther, whereas the Church affirms that all baptized children have been regenerate, and are children of God, he assigns as a reason that,—

"Since prayer is made previous to the administration of the rite, that the child may be born again of the Holy Spirit, it is assumed," mark the word, "*it is assumed*" that the prayer is answered, and the blessing given ; it is "assumed that God's Holy Spirit, (if not vouchsafed before) "is vouchsafed then—not in consequence of the washing of

“water, but, in answer to the supplications of the congregation offered in faith ;—a charitable hope is entertained that such is the case, and as soon as baptism—is administered, we thank God accordingly. We then hail the child as regenerate.”—Page 44.

My objection to this theory of Mr. Molyneux is very serious indeed, and partly because, while objecting to one unscriptural doctrine, before he can escape it, he assigns to his Church several, equally unscriptural, and inconsistent. For, first, it has never yet been shown from Scripture, that any Church has a right to accept “a proxy for the principal.” To do this is to set aside the law of Christ. The very passages to which he himself refers might teach him better. Secondly, there is nothing in Scripture to prove that the prayers of “the Church,” in a baptismal service, shall be followed by the gift of faith to any person whatever. “Faith,” the Apostle says, “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Thirdly, it is quite unscriptural to affirm as a fact, what is only taken on assumption. The Church is guilty (I know no other word exactly adapted to express the sense), the Church is guilty (I say) of *lying*, every time she says that a child *is regenerate*, when she *knows* that the fact is *uncertain*, and, as Mr. Molyneux affirms, a mere ASSUMPTION. We have no right to issue as facts, what are only *assumptions*, and destitute of proof. But, farther, if it be assumed that the child has been regenerated in answer to prayer, why, then, does the Church take “a proxy for the principal?” She does not take “a proxy *for* the principal” in that case, but, like a good housewife, she takes both proxy and principal. If the principal be obtained, she should not ask for a proxy as well. But, lastly, this scheme falls under the

full weight of his own censure. It sends the parent away from the font, with all the instincts of nature awakened, cherishing a *false idea* of regeneration in her offspring. To her, it is of no importance, whether the water or the prayer effected the change. She, in her simplicity, will think of the whole ceremony as one. All her concern is to know that her child has been benefited, and by this easy process made an heir of salvation. If this be admitted, she will not contend for words. The *idea* is what she wants, and this, when granted to her, and granted by a minister of God, in the name of God, will form a most pernicious poison, mingling with, and corrupting the very tenderest sympathies of her moral existence.

Such, then, is the condition in which the circumstances around you have placed the matter in hand. But in order to make our pathway quite plain, we must attend a little more carefully to the real subject in dispute. Baptismal Regeneration is only one form in which the error is stated. Where these words are rejected "with *abhorrence*," benefits are ascribed to Infant Baptism, which are quite unscriptural, and the supposition of which, have almost the same moral effect upon mankind. With some, it is "a seal of the covenant." With others, it is an "introduction into the visible Church." Some contend that "grace" is always communicated in Baptism ; others, that it is not communicated invariably, but only sometimes. Some will have it to be a "regeneration ;" others will not admit that term. All, however, urge the observance of this rite as a duty on parents, and plead that the infant baptized has a claim to the privilege. Some, you perceive,

plead that the benefit comes through the ceremony, taken as a whole. Others, that it comes through the prayer, which precedes the application of the water. And if I understand some of the authors rightly, they conclude that the blessing comes through the pronunciation of the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But though the variation of view may be almost infinite, yet this idea is retained by all, namely, they all teach that a child is *benefited* by its Baptism, in some way, and to some extent. They all justify what "Aquila" calls "*the expectation of a spiritual gift in Baptism.*" They all regard it as an official and vicarious medium of communicating grace to man. This is the common idea,—the idea that we have to discuss.

But still in entering upon this discussion, you will be pleased to distinguish very carefully between the *moral* effect which this Divine institution may have, when received by a believer as his own act, from the effect which is here assigned to it as a vicarious act, performed not by the wish or will of the infant, but by some one else on his behalf. In the former case, like all other acts of obedience, it may strengthen the habit of obeying. It may solemnize his engagement, as in the case of matrimony; and it may become a witness for God to all beholders. It may become a means by which the individual shall be recognized, as standing in some special relationship: in this case, it would be the open and deliberate act of one who was giving up the world for God. I will not say that such an act must, of necessity, be without benefit to him who performs it, or to those who observe it. But this is not the kind of benefit under our consideration. The notion pleaded for, and

implied in this dispute is, that of an actual communication to the child of some essence or spiritual substance, which they call "*grace*." It may be refined and subtle, like the galvanic fluid in physical nature ; but, whether it be a mental or a physical element, the Church does not say. This, however, is said to be of no importance, for we are not to understand the things of God ; and, whether it be matter or mind, or whether it be some essence, so refined and subtle in itself, as to defy our detection and definition, nay, although it can neither be seen in its substance nor yet in its effects, yet the advocates of this doctrine say, it is *something that comes through ordained hands*, by this ceremony, to infants who are baptized ; and who are thus, in one vocabulary *sealed*, in another vocabulary, *regenerated*.

As far as I can learn, none of the parties suppose this benefit to be conferred *without* God, but *by* God through this medium. It is remarkable, how each in turn suffers from the rest a similar injustice, in treating of this particular. The Dissenting Pædo-Baptists, for instance, assail the tractarians on this ground with absolute vehemence, charging them with presumption in assuming power to dispense pardon and justification in baptism *without* God ; while the tractarians are constantly pleading, in the strongest and clearest terms, that God has appointed them in their Church to be the official agents, through whom these blessings are to be communicated in Baptism ; which is the very thing affirmed by the Westminster Assembly of themselves and their successors. Nothing, therefore, can be more unjust.

This injustice, however, is again repeated by the Tractarians, and writers of highest authority in the

English Hierarchy, in the charges which they prefer against the "Church of Rome." They say that that Church assumes to itself the exclusive right and power of conferring Sacramental Grace by the acts which it performs, independently of the Holy Spirit ! Whereas "the Roman Catholic Church" has most expressly affirmed, that these sacraments are the appointed means in which God conveys this blessing by his ministers : which is the very thing affirmed by the tractarians of themselves.

I leave you to judge whether this mutual injustice in parties so near akin, is not most unnaturally flagitious. In each instance, however, they fall into this mistake, through a partial statement of each other's views, an error common to them all, and to which every disputant is constantly liable. I shall illustrate this by exhibiting the case of Rome. The causes of justification were by that Church, in the Council of Trent, stated to be five ; the *final* cause, the *efficient* cause, the *meritorious* cause, the *instrumental* cause, and the *formal* cause. They were led into this acuteness of distinction, by the discipline of their schools and the refinements which attended the discussions of their day. The *final* cause, they say, is "*the glory of God and of Christ, and life eternal.*" It is for these ends that men are justified. Secondly, "the *efficient* cause is, "*the merciful God who freely cleanses and sanctifies, sealing and anointing with his Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.*" Thirdly, the *meritorious* cause, "*His well beloved and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who merited justification for us by His holy passion on the cross, and made satisfaction for us to God the Father.*" The *instrumental* cause is "*the Sacrament of*

“ *Baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no one can ever obtain justification.*” Fifthly, “ the sole formal cause is, *the righteousness of God,—with which, being endued by Him, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind,—receiving righteousness in ourselves,—which the Holy Spirit bestows upon each as He wills, and according to our respective dispositions and co-operations.*”

I have quoted this from the Decree on Justification, as issued by authority from Rome, after the Council of Trent. This may be found, with numerous other documents to the point, in Cramp’s *Text Book of Popery*. I by no means plead for the accuracy of this scheme, when compared with sacred Scripture. That is not the matter of discussion. I only quote it to show that the imputation is unjust here, as in the case of the Tractarians. If the *instrumental* cause of justification were stated alone, as the *sole* cause of justification, it might be proper to charge the Roman Catholics with conferring the grace of justification *without* God, and *independently* of the Holy Spirit. But there are four other causes associated with it, and each of these is to be considered with the rest.

The error of Rome is exactly the same with that of the Tractarians, with that of “ Presbyter,” with that of “ Aquila,” with that of the Church to which they belong, and nearly the same with that of Mr. Molyneux, their opponent. It is coincident with that of the Assembly of Divines, and multitudes of Dissenting Pædobaptists. For instance, when the Rev. George Clayton pronounced that celebrated sentence, published in your hand-bills—“ Such full assurance of hope have I in *the efficacy* of this sacrament, that I doubt not but it will

“ appear, when the secrets of divine operation shall be disclosed, that the seeds and principles of the better life, *were* in some instances, *infused* into the mind at the very hour when baptismal water was externally applied” —the words, which I have rendered emphatic, show that he did not ascribe “ *the efficacy*” of baptism to the ceremony, *without* God, but rather to the Spirit which, as he thought, descends to operate upon the child *in* or *through* that ceremony as an instrument. Thus they all make baptism an ordained means of communicating this certain essence, which they call “ grace.” They all affirm that God is its Author and Giver, that the minister is His *agent*, and that baptism is His *instrument*, in giving it ; and that the infant baptized is its *recipient*. Though each party claims for himself his own particular grade of infallibility, they differ in the choice of words : but all agree in adhering to the objectionable sentiment.

The following sentence from “ Aquila,” is rather curious. He is speaking of the Rev. Capel Molyneux. “ *If misconception and ignorance led the writer,*” (Mr. Molyneux) “ *to confound his opponent’s views of “ Baptismal Regeneration with the opus operatum of “ Popery, candour and fair dealing should have induced him to make some effort, to put forth a clear statement of his own.*” Now this surly expression, “ the *opus operatum* of Popery,” will afford you an instance of that indignant and guilty anger, with which these several associates in error resent their detection in bad society. They call the Church of Rome by foul names, such as “ Babylon,” and “ the Great Whore,” and so forth ; and by possibility she may deserve these appellations. But why then should they drink of the cup which has been

filled with her abominations, and loiter about the threshold of her gates? The man, who is found in company with a harlot, will never redeem his character by fierceness of temper, rough language, and injustice, ostentatiously exercised towards the partner of his sin. In this Latin expression, there is no magic to create abhorrence, especially when the very doctrine which it expresses is retained and taught by him, who shudders at its utterance—and, indeed, why should a man shudder at the utterance of a word? When an individual pronounces the word “murder,” my hand does not shake, because my fingers are not dipped in blood. The case is simply this. In the council of Trent, the fathers resolved that baptism was a means by which God communicated grace, irrespective of faith in him that received the sacrament, to children, for instance, who could not believe. This was their first step. “Aquila,” and “Presbyter,” and the Church of England, and all the parties of whom I speak, plead for the same position. They all say, that children are rightly baptized, and that they are benefited by the baptism. Having determined this, they had then to determine whether this “grace” or benefit depended on the priest who was appointed to administer the sacrament, or on the sacrament itself. This was the question then in dispute, not whether it came from God or not; (that was already determined;) but whether the grace depended on the priest who administered it, or on the sacrament itself. The former, they called “grace *ex opere operantis*,” that is, grace caused by him who administered the sacrament, or at least depending upon him: the latter, they called “grace *ex opere operato*,” that is, grace caused by the sacrament administered, and not dependent

on the character of the priest. The object of this decision was, to deliver men's minds from the anxiety which they must feel, respecting a hope which would be supposed to rest upon the virtue or spirituality of a priest at the time when he administered the sacrament. They intended to remove this doubt ; and they made this decree, in order that men might conclude that, even if the priest were drunk when he administered the baptism, it would, on this principle, be effective notwithstanding, and be equally beneficial, not because the sacrament operated *without God*, but (as it is affirmed distinctly,) because *God*, who *operated* in the sacrament, could not be obstructed in *His* work by the imperfection of the agent He employed. This was the reasoning at Trent ; and this very sentiment is formally stated by Dr. Williams, the Independent, in his Treatise on Baptism. The same sentiment is equally retained, as you may see from the quotations of "Aquila" and "Presbyter," in the Church of England at this present time. The efficiency of her ceremonies, as we are taught to believe, by no means depends upon the character of her ministers ; be they what they may, the power of her rites remains the same. She declares distinctly, that her own sacraments are as effectual when administered by bad men, *if they have been duly ordained*, as when they are administered by men the most exalted in personal piety. She teaches this, not with reference to the act of baptism only, but extends it also to the service of ordination ; and without it the fancied apostolical succession in the Church could never be maintained, even with the shadow of a probability. This, therefore, is the *opus operatum* of the Church of

England, which is the same with that of the Church of Rome. Whether it be right or wrong, I will not stop to examine. I merely affirm now, that the doctrine is in both Churches precisely the same. In every case too, in which any such benefit is ascribed to the baptism of an infant, the very same principle is involved. If the baptism confer upon an infant *any* benefit whatever, it *is* and *must* be an *opus operatum*, and nothing else. It cannot depend on the faith of the infant, for it has none : this is conceded by most, if not by all the parties concerned. Nor does it depend on the character of the ordained minister. But in the language of the twenty-seventh article, as quoted by "Aquila" himself, "Baptism "is not only a sign of profession, but it is also a sign of "regeneration, or new birth, *whereby, as by an instrument they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into "the Church.*" You recollect that when I read the causes of justification as laid down by the Council of Trent, baptism was called the *instrumental* cause. This "regeneration, or new birth," therefore, is a grace communicated by the instrumentality of the sacrament itself, independently either of faith in the person baptized, or of piety in the minister who baptized him ; and this is precisely the sentiment inculcated in Rome.

I wish this to be most perfectly understood, because it is on this exercise of unfairness towards each other that each party rests his defence. If your time would permit, many most curious facts might be adduced to illustrate this statement. I could show you the Church of Rome ranging her artillery of argument against all kinds of idolatry and heathenism, and pleading for the

* See Note, A.

spirituality and elevation of her nature and fellowship, because she despises their empty rites ; and yet by degrees she has transferred almost the whole of those heathen abominations to her own use and worship. Again, the Tractarians defend themselves by flinging this phrase, like salt, into the eyes of every inquirer ; and then, in the excitement, they steal away from the point of debate ; yet these very Tractarians flee to the same principle for the strength of their own polity. And, farther, Dissenting Pædo-Baptists are found who burst with spleen when spoken of as participating in Tractarianism ; and yet, by the benefits they ascribe to Infant, and promiscuous Baptism, convey the very same principle into their own institutions. They do not seem to me dishonest, but rather victims of their own reasonings and neglect of scripture : for thus, as though self-deceived, each falls into the error that he condemns. This, then, is the state of the question : for it matters very little in what form the poison may be administered : it will take effect in every state and every combination, in which it is or can be received ; and, if it have but time and scope for action, the least particle will prove fatal to the best interest of mankind. When once we allow such benefits to be associated with that ceremony, the question must be settled, *What is the nature and extent of the benefit so conferred ?* How then is this to be done ? The Tractarians say, with truth, an appeal must then be made to Scripture, and Scripture must decide. Here the reasoning of the Tractarian becomes, upon the supposition *absolutely unanswerable*. I have never found in all the literature of the Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists, one single position taken against the Oxford Theory that

can be sustained, when once a benefit has been admitted in connexion with Infant Baptism. Before the ceremony of infant baptism can be relieved from this alliance with Baptismal Regeneration, and “the *opus operatum* of Popery,” it must be exhibited to mankind as absolutely *useless*; and before our baptism comports with Scripture, that useless ceremony must be altogether laid aside. It is with all, therefore, that we have to do. Call them by what name you will, persons admitting *regeneration* in baptism, *pardon* in baptism, *justification* in baptism, *sealing* in baptism, *induction* by baptism, *recognition* in baptism, *dedication* by baptism, or whatever you please; these supposed sacramental benefits associated with the baptism of infants and unbelievers, the brethren; with whom I have the honour to be united, most solemnly denounce, as altogether unsustained by divine authority. In support of them an appeal is now made, by their own advocates, to sacred Scripture. Our duty therefore is to examine these Scriptures, most carefully and conscientiously; and this we intend to do, when I have completed my design in the present exercise, and given, in the second Lecture, a history of the origin and growth of the controverted sentiment.

I now proceed to consider, thirdly, *the relation of this dogma to certain truths and duties of great importance to us all*. We must not, however, anticipate the appeal which is made to the Divine Oracles, and which we have to examine in a subsequent discourse. My object in this and the following Lecture, is merely to prepare the way for that appeal, by furnishing such facts, as will enable each hearer to decide for himself when those Scriptures are brought before him. I wish at the same time, in

conducting these preliminary steps, not to use even an approach to evasive reasoning. I shall therefore be most open with you, as we are bound to be in all our dealings with mankind. Let others take advantage of artifice, if they please: we will rather covet and seek that of simple, direct, and open-hearted integrity. I do not, therefore, hide my own opinion, but at the same time entreat you to pronounce no decision on the case, till all the evidence has been brought before you. Suspending your judgment, therefore, for the present, it may yet be remembered that the dogma *must* be either *true* or *false*; and, on either supposition, we may easily discover the importance which attaches to the subject of our inquiry. It is on this account, my brethren, because it is for your life, and that of your offspring, that this duty was undertaken; and, in performing it, the feelings have been chained so much to a written document, that greater calmness and clearness of expression might render the reasoning more distinct and conclusive, and bring within the space assigned to me, all that is needful to make your judgment on the case both decisive and satisfactory. For if the imagination were at liberty, all the ordinary descriptions of poetry might, with facility, be exceeded, in exhibiting those endeared interests into which this subject is constantly penetrating, and which, whether right or wrong, are brought under its terrible control. Indeed, there are few things that can be more momentous; since, by affecting the condition of the individual himself, personally, and at so early a period of life, it must necessarily affect the whole course and end of his existence.

For first, supposing that the doctrine be true, and

admitting for a while, that by the appointment and law of God, a class of men hath been appointed, to confer on Infants, at the beginning of their lives, this strange and supernatural gift of grace by baptism, which, like the magnetic fluid given to a bar of iron, shall generate a new and superior nature, that inclines to God as the magnet to the pole ;—supposing, I say, that this is quite true,—then, neither can any office deserve so high esteem as that to which these men are called, nor can any gift be more important than that which they confer. What mother would, what mother ought, what mother could, on such a supposition, or in such a case, suffer her infant to rise up into life, destitute of a blessing so awfully needed by our fallen nature, and supposed to be so easily attainable by the appointed instrumentality ? When she looks upon her babe, as inheriting from her the elements of a common depravity, she will be impelled by all the force of maternal instinct, to seize this short and easy method of curing the malady. On the supposition of this rite having the power of placing the dependent object of her sympathy and care, within the covenant of grace, and under the direct eye and supervision of a kind Redeemer, and in actual communication with the Holy Spirit of God, she will hasten to the font with solicitude, and retire from it with joy. If it be true that her babe was there regenerated, and made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, she will feel the appropriateness of all the thanksgivings in that service, and rest in peace while contemplating the future. If she find, in Holy Scripture, great and precious promises made to such as are united to Christ ; in her warm heart they will find a ready application to her little innocent.

It will be hard for her to find an exception to its claim. *Upon the supposition*, all this is *perfectly right*. Nay, if the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration be taught by the Church, so also is that of final perseverance. Such a mother has, therefore, on the premises, a right to conclude that, if God will be faithful to His covenant in any case, he will be faithful to it in the case of her child; and that since, by an ordinance supposed to be His, it has become an inheritor, He will give to it the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. She has, I say, an absolute right on the premises to expect its final perseverance, and she is bound to bring up her child with that expectation. With that expectation she will bring it to the house of God, to Confirmation, and to the Table of the Lord; and if called to that painful duty, she will lay it in the grave, in sure and certain hope of everlasting life, because it has been baptized. In all this she would not be deserving of blame, but of praise. She has no right to speculate respecting the character of the means which God has appointed; but, if God *hath* appointed this as the means and instrument, or in the language of "Presbyter," the "effectual means" of regeneration, she is bound to believe in God, and expect all that God has promised by that or any other means whatever. The expectation, so raised and cherished, she is bound to incorporate with all her domestic arrangements. It must be moulded into the moral constitution of her offspring; and whether it be destined for the Bar, for the Army, or Navy, for the Church, for the Senate, or for the Throne; it must never be forgotten, that *in baptism* it was born to an inheritance far more exalted than the highest that earth can give.

All this, I say, is perfectly right upon the supposition. In short, by affecting the personal and spiritual condition of the man, it affects all that belongs to him, and everything in which he is engaged. If the doctrine be *true*, it affects him for the *better*; if it be *false*, it affects him for the *worse*. For, on the supposition that the whole matter has been fabricated by man, (I entreat you to consider this carefully,) then no deception can be more gross, or more injurious to the species. By assuming divine authority, where no such authority had been given, and affirming in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, what never transpired, and what all experience must contradict,—the professed agency of mercy would become reduced to contempt, and our faith in Him, as having devised such means for the exaltation of a class, would be blighted to the root. On this supposition, there is no severity which the authors of such a delusion might not expect, from the recoil of injured, oppressed, and insulted humanity. Whenever the imposition came to be detected, every victim of its power would be ready to exclaim, Was there not delusion enough on earth without this? Are there not names enough on earth associated with untruth and fraud, without desecrating those of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Is there not scope enough for human artifice in the regions of fancy, of poetry, of romance, of general literature, in the regions of politics, of trade, or of domestic intrigue,—but you must bring the pernicious element into the Church, into the worship, and to the very Altar of God? Is it not enough to have empiricism in medicine, but must we also have empiricism in sacraments? To such inquiries the dis-

covery of such a delusion must inevitably impel its awakened victims ; and hence the horrible recoil, which has, at different periods of the Church, filled her most abject votaries with raging infidelity. It was not the power of genius in Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Marmontel, and others, which deluged France with blood in the Atheistical Revolution. The nation felt that by this sacramental delusion it had been deceived and insulted. Whether right or wrong, this was the cause, and that the effect. But if the dogma is not founded in truth, and duly authorized of God ; if the Regeneration is not real, and its benefits are altogether fictitious ;—the malady is increased by the concealment of the fact. For, then, this vain phantom takes the place of a healthful and judicious solicitude in the religious education of the child, and supplants that spirit of prayer, in which a tender mother should daily present her offspring before God. Instead of praying for a gift which is indispensable, and performing a duty from which no one is exempted ; she is then leaning on a deception, and blessing God for things that have no existence. When she should be teaching the child that he must be regenerated, she is filling him with delusive ideas of his spiritual gift in Baptism. Under this impression, she will teach him to read his Bible, and come to the house of God, to the worship, to the Confirmation, to the Supper of the Lord, and to all the duties of life. Into every station which he has to fill in life, and into every relationship that he forms, he enters with the impression that he *is*, not *is to be*, nor that he *ought* to be, but that he *is* a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. And if

this be not true, after all, the result must be, that in every hour, in every solicitude, and in every change of life, not excepting the moment of mortality itself, he is under the influence of a delusion, the most pernicious in its nature and lasting in its operation ; which was administered to him by a priest, confirmed to him in the name of the blessed Trinity, and endeared by the recollections of his mother's love.

Indeed, nothing is more solemn, nor can any class of men be placed in a more awful position, than that in which the argument of "Presbyter" and "Aquila" has placed themselves, and those whom their reasonings are designed to influence. I am sorry that I omitted to bring with me a document, which exhibits this fact in a light immensely interesting, especially as the subject of inquiry is connected with the advancement of personal religion. I refer to a tract issued in Devonshire, giving an account of what is called the "Charlinch Revival," which took place under the administration of a clergyman of the Church of England, who officiated in a country village, within the diocese of Exeter. It pleased God to pour out His Spirit upon the administration of the word there, until not only a great number of the villagers were affected with deep concern for the salvation of their souls, but a great number of children connected with the schools, and the several families of the villagers. Amongst the rest was a girl, she might be about thirteen years of age, who was bowed down with a sense of her guiltiness and need of instruction. She went to a lady who was connected with the Established Church, and from whom she had received many acts of kindness. She told her tale of inward bitter grief, and asked for

instruction, that she might be guided to a remedy. The lady asked her what she was so much grieved about? She said, "I feel that my heart is not right with God." The answer of the lady was to this effect, you were regenerated in your baptism, and you have not been guilty of any open sin, you are safe ; these griefs are unfounded. When she again pressed her inquiries still farther, the same answer was repeated in other terms, until the girl, dropping a tear upon the earth, retired in silence to weep and implore peace with God. She found that peace at the foot of the Cross, which the Baptismal Regeneration could never give to her wounded heart. She never again sought instruction from the source to which she had first applied ; but, pondered over the pages of the Holy Word of God, and found, in communion with the Saviour, that peace which the world and its shadows can never give nor take away. Here is a case in which the legitimate results of the system were actually seen. Had it been suffered to operate, the convictions of that dear child would have been stifled, and her soul in all probability have been sacrificed to that delusion.*

Similar to this, is a case that I might mention, respecting one of the most profound politicians, who exhibited in a riper mind the pernicious influence of precisely the same error. It is known, perhaps, to many of you, that Talleyrand, the great negotiator of Europe, was at one time high in office in the Romish Church, and then sank down into the basest infidelity. How was it that a man so given to the Church of Rome, with her ceremonies and rites could be so transformed? I answer, all his religious feelings were extinguished in the con-

* See Note, B.

fessional, and amidst the sacraments of his Church. His keen eye penetrated the system; and, without a renewed heart, he saw the fictitious character of all the gifts which he had to confer. I have been told by a Catholic priest himself, that he has often been absolutely oppressed with grief when under the necessity of administering *what he knew to be a fiction* to individuals who were bowing in solicitude at his feet. Such operations might well affect the heart, and sooner or later they will and must affect the heart; and will cut to the very root of all things good in man. The moment we have taught men to identify this error with the system of the gospel, we have brought them to the very verge of a precipice, from which it requires but one step more to plunge them into the deepest ruin of infidelity.

I do not mean to anticipate the decision that is to be obtained from those sacred Scriptures to which an appeal is made; but the alternative, which I have now set before you and thus illustrated, may convince you that the inquiry is of unspeakable importance, and one that ought to be prosecuted with extreme care. The question relates, you perceive, to all such benefits as are and have been ascribed to Infant Baptism, whether they be called "Regeneration," or by any other name. Your advantages for prosecuting the inquiry are at this juncture multiplied, and hence your responsibility is the greater. I shall, therefore, hope that the kind attention of this evening will be continued until these Lectures have been finished, since, without the authority and decision of Scripture, your evidence on the case will be altogether incomplete. If I deal openly with you, and state my own views with all the

feeling of my heart, it is not with the uncharitable intention of dishonouring others : it is my love of truth and desire for your good, which induce me to place, in a strong light, the character of sentiments to which at present you may feel it your duty to adhere, and to which I hope you will adhere, as long as you feel that they are from God ; but, at the same time, let candour characterize all your inquiries, and be ye also prepared to learn.

But though the testimony of Scripture is necessary to complete the evidence, I may yet observe here, that this is by no means the only source of evidence to which you may appeal. Do you not see, from the very nature of the case itself, that it must be *necessarily* determined by *experience*? When the magnetic fluid is imparted to a bar of steel, the steel which receives it turns to the north and thus displays its magnetism. When the galvanic fluid is imparted to substances which receive it, the action of those substances on others, shows the presence of the element which they have imbibed. If, therefore, grace, or the spiritual gift of baptism, flow through the words or fingers of a priest, by baptism, to the child baptized; that benefit must be seen in the result. Whether we believe it or no, it must act. Our faith in the magnetic fluid does not make it operate, but by its operation our faith in it is enforced. The case before us is exactly the same. If this spiritual essence be given in baptism, it will operate, whether we believe it or not. Let it be reduced to experience, therefore, and the result will show the truth or falsehood of the theory. Appeal to the facts before you. See if the baptized children are better, in body or soul, than the

unbaptized. The experiment has been made for ages, and the results may be seen in your own homes. The experiment has been made, in every variety of form, by officers differently ordained, with various professions of infallibility, by bad men and by good men. The ceremony has been changed and modified, to augment its grandeur and fit it for the society of princes, or to clothe it with simplicity and make it suitable to peasants. It has been aided by all kinds of elements, by salt, by oil, by saliva of a priest, by common water, and by water from the Jordan ;—and what, after all, is the result ? I answer, the experience of all nations and of all ages pronounces it a delusion, and nothing more. This, I say, is the judgment of experience, but it is proper to withhold your decision until we have considered the testimony of Scripture.

But yet “Aquila” and “Presbyter” have conducted the inquiry to a point which gives still greater force to the remark that I have just made. They affirm to us that the gospel has an awful but yet a beauteous peculiarity in itself, by which it is distinguished from all other dispensations, even of Almighty God ; and commends itself to our faith rather than the Jewish system, rather than the heathen or patriarchal system, rather than any other system whatever, a fragment of which has remained to the present day. What, then, is this great peculiarity of the gospel ? It is that now, “we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, that we may be thereby transformed into his own likeness, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Through the rent veil we have direct access to Almighty

God ; and, by that access peculiar benefit results to us from the intercession of Him who, "having purged "our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on "high." And do you not perceive, that this subject involves the whole question of that access? for aliens have no right within the veil. It is the privilege of the sons of God only to draw nigh to Him in a new covenant relationship. And if we make the possession of this privilege to be connected with promiscuous Baptism or that of Infants, rather than with the faith which is produced by intelligent conviction ; then this privilege seems extended to all the subjects of that ceremony, and its weighty importance is lost in the advocacy and culture of faith.

Now this which stands out as a solemn peculiarity in the gospel of Jesus Christ, constituted the great expected blessing foretold from the beginning to mankind. It was of this that God himself spoke in Paradise, when He said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's "head." It was of this that Almighty God spoke, when He gave His promise to the relic of the anti-diluvian world, now rescued from the deluge, and placed His bow in the cloud. It was this that He entailed upon the family of Abraham, when He said, "In thy seed shall all nations "of the earth be blessed ;" shutting up the fallen families of mankind who had sunk into idolatry to this only hope, and affirming that they now should turn and find salvation, if at all, at the hands of the seed of Abraham. The entail of that great inheritance of mercy first fixed on Abraham, was confirmed to Isaac, then to Jacob, to David, and finally, to the son of David ; who must hold for ever, the high and solemn post between God and man. Now the

Son of David sits at God's right hand, and gives the law by which fallen sinners may have access to a forgiving God ; and he has issued His covenant and His decree. Surely then, nothing can be more important for us to understand, than the solemn terms on which we approach to God, through Him who is our great High Priest and Mediator, and find our peace and blessedness : for to procure this salvation He died ; and to improve the blessing, so procured, is the very object of our living upon earth.

Let me observe also, before I sit down, that the practice in question affects this great peculiarity of the gospel, just at a point where it is of unspeakable importance. For the gospel is altogether a practical system, wherein the proof of divine faithfulness and mercy hangs on the results of human action, as defined in the Saviour's teaching ; hence it was affirmed by the Redeemer, "If a man will do His will," that is do the things which Jesus commands him, "he shall know of "this doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of "myself." How then shall he know it? *Experience*, will demonstrate. In acting under the guidance of the Saviour, he shall find blessings that will fill his heart to overflowing, with deep and solemn conviction that Jesus came from God, and that he leads to God. What then will be the effect, if after all we find this ceremony giving the pledge of eternal life to thousands and to millions, in whom that pledge becomes violated and the blessing lost ? If it be said that this ceremony actually makes the child a son of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, and if we find it in any one case to fail,—unquestionably there is then a.

doubt thrown over the whole system ; for it may fail again. If it be found in *many* cases to fail, the doubt becomes increased. But if it be found in *most* cases to fail, the doubt becomes dreadful. If it becomes impossible for any man to show success in *any one* case, then the supposed truth of God becomes actually refuted ; and confidence, in observing what professes to be his revealed will, is reduced to an absolute impossibility.

Thus, then, the question to be discussed, and the importance of determining it, have been laid before you. In the next Lecture, I shall show the origin of this sentiment and the history of its diffusion, especially in the western Churches, pointing out as far as needful to our purpose the several forms in which it has been stated and defended by its several advocates : and these things, being well apprehended first, will prepare our way for the decision which we hope to obtain from sacred Scripture.

LECTURE II.

ON THE RISE AND SPREAD OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION AND ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS—In the last exercise, I endeavoured to protect myself from all supposed participation in that act of injustice, to which the “Church of Rome” has been subjected by the Reformers, and to which the Reformers and Tractarians, have, in their turn, been subjected by their opponents. I speak of the allegation that they declare the water, or ceremony of Baptism, to communicate an ethereal essence which they call “grace,” *without* the power or Spirit of Almighty God. Although the parties recriminate each other on this point most blameably, every impartial observer will see, that all (so far as they may be conceived themselves to understand what they teach,) regard this “sacrament,” not as an efficient and independent cause of the benefit which they ascribe to it, but in conformity with the expression of “the Church of Rome,” they declare it to be “an instrumental cause,” or, more simply, an *instrument* by which the Holy Spirit, operating in what Christ hath ordained, confers the benefit in question. You will perceive, therefore, that my objections lie not against the supposition that these parties ascribe to Baptism a power of conferring benefits without God, but against the assumption *that this Baptism of children, or of unbelievers, in any case, confers upon them any benefit*

whatever. This is that common and uniting principle, which, being found in all these systems, is now brought under our special consideration.

Bearing this in mind, therefore, let me add now, that it is not my intention in this exercise, to request you to pronounce on the truth or untruth of that assumption at present. My own opinion I do not wish to conceal : yet I desire to conduct you through this investigation, in such a manner, as to leave you prepared to exercise your own judgments with confidence, rather than submit to mine. Moreover, an appeal has been made to Scripture, and you ought not to pronounce any judgment, until that witness has been heard. But our opponents, or rather the advocates of this doctrine, meet us at the entrance of this inquiry, by objecting to *our* interpretation of Scripture, and by appealing to those ancient Christian authors, which are commonly called the Fathers of the Church. They say, that the criticism of antiquity is to be trusted with greater confidence than that of modern times ; and thus they find means to obscure, and even overturn, the direct instructions of the Divine Oracles. The principle on which this diversion (for it is nothing else) is conducted, we utterly reject ; for, if Scripture and the Fathers speak diversely on any subject, we are bound to obey the former and reject the latter. But, though the Fathers have no authority to decide against Scripture, yet there can be no objection to prepare the way for an appeal to Scripture, by reviewing, as briefly as possible, here, the origin and diffusion of the sentiment in dispute. We shall then see who have been its originators and advocates ; and thence we shall be enabled to understand by whose judgment it is, that

these advocates wish our interpretation of the sacred Scriptures to be influenced.

As far as I could do it, an outline of the whole argument has been given in the hand-bill. In order to assist the memory, all the particulars therein set forth, may be classed under five heads. First, the *ancient doctrine of Baptism set forth and authorized in the earliest age of the Church*. Secondly, the *change of that doctrine, in the "Western Church," into the form in which it has come down to us*. Thirdly, the *revised declaration of that doctrine in the Church of Rome, which took place at the Council of Trent*. Fourthly, the *adoption of this doctrine in "the Reformed Churches."* And, fifthly, *its revival and diffusion, in the present day, by the Oxford Tractarians and their followers*. It is necessary that we should attend to these points with care, in order that we may be enabled properly to understand the nature of the question which is to be determined.

But the subject thus submitted for your inquiry is very extensive, and might rather call for a history of the Christian church than for a single lecture. Great care must be used, therefore, lest by attempting too much, we should accomplish nothing. But we shall find some assistance in using the guidance of our opponents, to which I hope there will be no objection. The Tractarians, and the advocates of Infant Baptism in general, have made repeated appeals to "the Fathers of the Church;" and, amongst those which have been thus employed, the names of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Cyprian, appear with peculiar prominence. To these, therefore, we shall give the chief attention ; and we shall

turn to others, only as they may be found necessary to elucidate our argument. Let us, therefore, now consider first, *The ancient doctrine of Baptism.*

But observe, by “the ancient doctrine of Baptism,” I do not mean that which was entertained or expressed by the Sacred Writers, but that view of Baptism which was entertained in the age immediately following them, the evidence of which rests, of course, upon the authority of the Fathers. Of these, Justin Martyr, both from his antiquity, and his constancy in life and death, as well as from the object for which he wrote his Apologies, deserves to be heard first on this question. He lived and flourished between the years, 140 and 164 : he was born in Samaria, about 40 years after the death of the Apostle John, and suffered martyrdom little more than 60 years after the decease of this last relic of the inspired men. His two Apologies were written in defence of the Christians, and addressed to the Emperor and Senate of Rome. Documents, intended to influence the highest earthly authority of his time, must have been composed with care; and since the interests of the whole Christian community were suspended on the effect which they might produce, we have a right to infer, that these works contained the sentiments of those, who were so deeply concerned in that result, and who (as far as we can learn) provided no other such means of defence for themselves in that general persecution. In these Apologies, therefore, he informs the Emperor and Senate, of whom the Churches of Christ were then composed. He speaks of Christians as men who, “*being virtuous, and living as Christ lived, are to be with God.*” The persons so named are distin-

guished by their individual character. They “*live as Christ lived*,” and cases are associated with this statement, showing their attachment to Christ to have been stronger than the tenderest ties of relationship, or even the love of life. (*First Apology. S. Justini Martyris Opera.* Ed. Paris. 1636, p. 41.) This is still farther explained by his account of the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper; for, having described the manner in which it is administered by the presiding elder, he adds :

“And this food is called by us an Eucharist, of which to partake, it is lawful to none other than to him who believes to be true the things that are taught by us, and who has been washed with the washing, on account of the forgiveness of his sins, and (entering) into a new birth, and who is so living as Christ hath taught.”—*Second Apology, Works*, p. 97.

Here again, the partakers of this peculiar and Christian ordinance, the Eucharist, are men who have believed, have been baptized, and whose profession of piety and subjection to Christ remains unimpeached.

This was not the only act reserved by Christians, exclusively to the members of their own body, but it was one of a most decisive and distinguishing character. By it the fraternal tie was recognized, and exclusion from this was, in effect, exclusion from the church. The qualification to this, therefore, was the qualification to Christian fellowship; and the depth of character required in this community, as intimated by the expressions, “*believe the doctrine, and live as Christ hath taught*,” may be seen from the following passage :

“We know of no supreme and righteous ruler in existence, besides the self-existing God. For like as all, avoid the undergoing of poverty, afflictions, or paternal dishonours; so also whatever reason may admonish, ought not

“to be chosen, he who is prudent will not choose. Jesus Christ, (I say) from whom we receive our name, Christians, our Teacher, and a Son, and an Apostle of the Father and Lord of all; hath declared before, that all these things should so be.”—*Works*, p. 59, 60.

Justin Martyr then proceeds to show, that all these afflictions which are appointed by Christ, their Teacher and Lord, are endured by Christians for his sake; although the instincts of nature, and natural prudence, would lead them to choose an opposite course in seeking to avoid them.

I quote this passage, merely to show the nature of that faith and self-consecration, on which the whole system of Christian fellowship was then built. It not only placed Jehovah, the one true God, above all other authorities, human or divine, but it also admitted the authority of His word and law in cases of affliction, to be so great, as to render the endurance of what He appoints both prudent and honourable, so that they should choose it, rather than forsake it. It will be found that they did not except from this rule even the case of mortality. By the act of their profession, they engaged to follow this their Teacher and Apostle from God, whithersoever he might lead; like soldiers they were sworn to lay down their lives in following this Captain of their salvation.

Keeping this point stedfastly in view, you will see at once the nature of their initiatory rite, from the following description:

“In what manner we have set ourselves apart for God, having been made anew, (*regenerated*) through the Christ, we will describe, lest by neglecting this we should in something seem to do wrong in the narration; as many as ever become persuaded, and believe

“the things which are taught and spoken by us to
“be true, and solemnly declare that they are able
“so to live, are instructed to pray and fast, to ask
“from God a forgiveness of their past sins, we praying
“and fasting with them. After that, they are led by us
“where there is water, and are born again by that kind of
“new birth with which we ourselves were born again ;—
“for, in the name of God the Father and Lord of all, and of
“our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they
“then perform the washing in water. For Christ also hath
“said, Unless ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the
“kingdom of heaven.”—*Works*, pp. 93, 94.

By this passage, which derives great strength from its connexion, we are told, not only what Baptism is, but also what were its pre-requisites. Persons were not *entertained* as candidates for this ordinance, without discrimination, but only such as, first, obeyed or submitted to the appeals of the Church, were *persuaded*, and *believed* ; secondly, who believed that the things spoken and taught by the Church were *true* ; thirdly, persons who declared themselves able (prepared) to *live*, as these doctrines taught by Christ required ; fourthly, who in these respects had been *made anew* through Christ. These several pre-requisites being found, the candidates were not then baptized ; but were instructed to fast and pray for the forgiveness of their sins, the Church fasting and praying with them. When this process had been completed, and the moral purpose of the convicted sinner had been united with the peaceful hope of pardon, they were led to some place where there was water, and thus Baptism was administered to them, and received by them.

On this passage, we must make two or three particular remarks. In the first place, you will please to observe,

that these *pre-requisites* of the ancient Baptism, include all that we now understand by *regeneration, faith, repentance, obedience, and designed self-devotion*. The Baptism, therefore, did not give these parts of spiritual blessing through Christ ; but the possession of these, with a peaceful enjoyment of pardon for past offences, were *indispensable conditions* of Baptism. The candidate must have obtained these through Christ, before he could be admitted to Baptism.

Secondly, you will please to observe, that this act of Baptism was *performed* in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, performed (I say) by *both* parties,—*administered* by the Church, and *received* by the candidates. And this appeal to the three-fold name of God, involves two ideas ; first, an acknowledgment of divine authority ; and, secondly, an appeal to the divine judgment. Both the privilege and the compact of the convert were thus recognized in his own act. The compact is expressed by the words *ανεθηκαμεν εαυτους τω Θεω*, “ we have set ourselves apart for God.” This was *their* act, performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The act of the Church, in administering the Baptism, is stated by Tertullian, to be an act of religious discipline. It was the administration of a pledge, on the part of the Church ; on the part of the candidate, it was the acceptance of that pledge ; and both being performed under an appeal to God, seem to have led to the ancient use of the word “ *Sacrament*,” which whether right or wrong, represents this act of Baptism under the form and solemnity of an oath.

Thirdly, you will please to observe, that Justin Martyr here expresses the outward and social result of

Baptism, by the word *αναγεννησις*, *new birth*. While the man remained unconverted and uninfluenced by the truth, he was addressed in compassion with overtures of mercy, but still regarded as an alien by the Church. When, being under conviction, he sought to be admitted to the sacrament of Baptism, he was placed under instruction, as an inquirer. Such persons were called Catechumens, *receivers of instruction*. They had a class for themselves, and a separate seat in the place of worship. But, when they had obtained a good hope of actual forgiveness from God, and pledged their devotion in Baptism, they were treated in all respects as Christians. The transaction bore a strict analogy to the *matrimonial ceremony*. As by that act, the voluntary devotion of a man to that relationship or state, is both made and recognized, and from that time, he is holden by authority to his engagement ; so precisely the man, *after* Baptism, was holden responsible for his own *voluntary* engagement of devotion to Christ. As the married man would henceforth be treated as a *husband* ; so the baptized man would henceforth be treated as a *Christian*. In either case, the preliminary attachments are supposed, and in both, alike, the privileges and responsibilities were recognized by judicial authority. The married man who violated his compact was punished as a culprit ; and the baptized man, who proved unfaithful to Christ, though it were by refusing martyrdom, was judged and excommunicated as an apostate. In his Baptism, he declared, by an appeal to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that he retired from the world, and gave himself to Christ. In the Church, and in the world, he thenceforth became regarded in a new cha-

racter ; and the entering of this new creature on his new privileges, new responsibilities, and the maintenance of his new character, was, in the bold and figurative language of the East, called a *new birth*.

The Roman philosopher, Seneca, used to say, that the gods saw nothing beautiful on earth, but good men struggling with adversity. But the ancient Christians considered that sinners who had by repentance forsaken their sins, and devoted themselves to Christ, while under all trials, and in the midst of all temptations, they maintained the integrity of this their new character, were the only objects of divine complacency and regard on earth. For them the Saviour reigned. They expected his second coming for their glory and joy. On this they builded all their hopes. They were filled with the great idea that theirs was the kingdom of heaven. Earth was only regarded by them as a place of sojourn. Their home, their palace, was a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So prominent was this in their thoughts, and so essential to all their discipline, that Chrysostom says, they were *baptized on account of the resurrection from the dead*. By this alone could their consecration be sustained. His words are very clear and very forcible.

“ After reciting the sacramental and fearful words, and
“ the solemn canons of the doctrines brought from Heaven ;
“ this also at the end we add, when about to baptize, call-
“ ing on [the candidate] to say, I believe even to a resur-
“ rection of the dead—and *upon this faith* we are baptized.”

You may see the whole of this passage brought out beautifully in Dr. Hammond's Commentary on 1 Cor. xv. 29 ; and he, being a Pædo-Baptist, and a Churchman, will, I hope, be taken as a witness.

The closing question put by the elder, and the reply given by the candidate, were clearly intended to show *the extent* of the faith professed, and to render the nature of the engagement obvious from the very beginning of the compact. A profession which exposed men to martyrdom every hour, could scarcely be maintained without a hope beyond the grave ; but, when such a hope was *avowed* from the very *beginning* of the relationship, the failure of the candidate's engagement would be altogether without excuse.

Such, then, was the baptism of the ancient Church. Its *pre-requisites* were, conversion and peace in Christ. The *act* was a voluntary, open, and sacramental self-consecration to God in Christ. The *result* was a recognition of the person baptized, in a new character, as an inheritor of new privileges, and the subject of new responsibilities, both in the Church and in the world. The act was appropriate only to him who had been made anew by Christ—and, when performed, it brought this new creature in Christ Jesus out into a public recognition,—by the Church as an object of love, for his edification and comfort ; by the world, as an object of hatred and persecution, for his trial, for the benefit of sinners, and for the glory of his Lord.

You will perceive that I am not now stating my own views, but only those of the ancient Church. All we can learn of its highest antiquity, shows that Regeneration was the *pre-requisite* of Baptism and *not its effect*. Baptism was an act of the Church performed on one who *had been*, in the strict sense of the word, regenerated, and who now wished to enter on the open profession and service of Christ. The converted sinner having been

created anew in Christ Jesus, thereby entered on the privileges and duties of his new existence; and this open profession is called being *born again*. Observe carefully, this open profession is called being *born again*. The convert was not now *generated* again, nor yet *created* again, these terms apply to the previous work of conversion, repentance, and faith; but *born* again, which always supposes a previous existence; and hence, in its spiritual application, it is here used to describe the outward act of profession. If any, therefore, plead for retaining the expressions *born again*, and *new birth*, in this sense, in modern language, they must make it quite clear what they mean; and then we will consider it, as it really is, and, as it has been very justly stated by Mr. Molyneux, a question about the use of words. But what words soever we please to employ, this will not alter the *doctrine* of the ancient Church. It stands in favour, not of Baptismal Regeneration, but of Believers' Baptism, and nothing else. You may call this public and personal act, a profession of faith, or joining the Church, or confirmation, or you may coin some other phrase, by which to express it, if you please. The great object is, when we speak, to be clearly and precisely understood. But as this question of words does not properly belong to our subject, I shall pass on now to consider, not the variation of language, but—

Secondly, *The change of view respecting the nature of Baptism itself, which was introduced into the Western Churches.* This constitutes a principal object of our investigation.

We shall be greatly assisted in pursuing this inquiry, by bearing in mind the two great difficulties which exercised the Church, at that time, with reference to the

Sacrament of Baptism. That there must have been many, we can have no doubt, when Christianity had been so suddenly diffused over so wide a space ; and its promulgation was attended with so great a want of books, and other means of instruction. One copy of Scripture, or perhaps of some small part of the Sacred Scripture, was often all that could be obtained by a city, a province, or even a kingdom. This was deposited in some safe or central place, to which the people, or their teachers, must come, with immense toil, whenever any question was to be determined respecting the will of God. It is scarcely possible, that there should not have arisen, out of such a state of things, a great diversity of view on many points, as well as on this which is now before us. But on this subject, the two principal points which called for discussion by the overseers of the Church, were—first, a disposition *to neglect Baptism altogether*, because of the trial to which it exposed the confessor ; and, secondly, a tendency *to administer it without sufficient care*. A word or two may be submitted on each of these particulars.

The first error was most prominent in the first ages of the Church, and it was felt with peculiar force in times of persecution. From what has been shown already, it will be seen, that the act of receiving Christian Baptism was altogether the result of deliberation and belief. But many passages of Scripture were found, in which salvation was promised as a result of faith alone. Hence they argued that, if men were justified by faith alone, and he who believed should be saved, there could be no absolute necessity for Baptism in any case. By Baptism their faith was avowed before men,

and they thus became exposed to persecution and martyrdom. Why then, they asked, might they not escape the trial of this *open* act, and build their hope on the *reality of their faith*, which could not be concealed from God? Thus a moral cowardice was generated; and, beginning from this step, as in the days of James, men sought to obtain salvation by *faith without works*. Hence, the ardour with which this heresy was refuted and condemned. The overseers of the Church would not acknowledge as real faith, any profession or state of mind, which did not prepare the person to go the whole length of their Lord's instruction. Since faith without works is dead, they rejected every professed believer who was not prepared to avow, under all circumstances, an affectionate devotion to Him, by whose blood he was redeemed from the righteous judgment of God. They urged the act of faith in receiving Baptism and its public consequences, as well as that act of faith, by which the spiritual salvation was received within. They would have men believers in their retirement, it is true: but they must also have them believers in society; otherwise none were admitted to their fellowship, and peculiar ordinances. It was necessary for their safety to be careful, because every individual introduced into their fellowship might become a spy. Hence they wrote their treatises to show the necessity of Baptism as well as faith, as an act of faith, essential to its consistency and credit. At times, they put the subject in a very strong light, and used language highly figurative; that, by suiting their style to the time in which they lived, a greater effect might be produced. Hence has arisen one of the greatest mistakes of our day. By taking that as *literal*, which these

writers used *figuratively*; and by applying that to *infants* who have never believed, which these writers use in reference to persons who have *avowed* their *faith*;—the modern advocates of Baptismal Regeneration have endeavoured, but most unjustly and ineffectually, to prove that these ancient Fathers supported and enforced the same doctrine as themselves. This I pronounce without any qualification whatever, to be utterly and absolutely false.

To show the importance and appropriateness of water baptism, as well as faith, is the object proposed in the first part of his Tract on Baptism, by Tertullian, who wrote in Carthage, from about the year 185 to the year 220. He affirms, that no one is directed in Scripture to seek salvation in the neglect of Baptism. But, in the other part of the same Tract, he condemns an indiscreet and precipitate administration of Baptism in any case. The fact is, individuals then pleaded that, since Philip baptized the eunuch suddenly, and since the Lord had commanded them to give to every one who asketh; and since children were in themselves innocent of actual transgression;—therefore persons ought to be baptized without any discrimination, especially if they desired it. These were the arguments which he had to meet. Bearing this in mind, you will easily perceive from his own words, which I will now lay before you, the precise state of the case in his time. Speaking of the administration of Baptism, therefore, he says:—

“ But they should know to whom that duty belongs,
“ that Baptism is not to be conceded with temerity to any
“ one—‘ Give to every one who asketh thee,’ hath its
“ own object pertaining to the case of alms. Yea, rather

“ that expression is to be more carefully considered,—‘ Give not that which is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine ;’ and ‘ Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be thou a partaker in other men’s sins.’ If Philip did so readily baptize the eunuch, let us recollect that a manifest and clear authority from God had intervened. The Spirit had commanded Philip to go into that way, and the eunuch himself was not found idle, nor was he one who desired a precipitate Baptism ; but having gone up to the temple to pray, being impressed with sacred Scripture. It was proper that he should be so found to whom God had willingly sent an apostle, to whom again the Spirit had commanded that he should join himself to the chariot of the eunuch ; a scripture had met his faith, being exhorted in time, the word is received, the Lord is made known, faith is not delayed, water is not wanting, and the business being finished, the apostle is snatched away.” *He adds farther*, “ But both he who seeks, and he who administers Baptism, may be deceived in the act. Therefore, for the condition, character, and even the age of every person, it is more useful that Baptism should be delayed, but especially of young people. For why is it necessary that sponsors should be brought into danger ? for they may themselves be prevented by death from fulfilling their engagement, and they may be deceived, by the breaking out of a bad disposition in their charge. The Lord did indeed say, ‘ Forbid them not to come to me.’ Let them come then, when they are grown up ; let them come when they learn, and are instructed why they come. Let them be made Christians when they shall have been able to know Christ. Why hasten an innocent age to a remission of sins ? We act more cautiously in secular things, so that you commit a Divine possession to those to whom you would not commit an earthly. Let them know how to seek salvation, that you may seem to have given to him that asketh. Nor for less reason are the unmarried also to be procrastinated, in whom temptation is prepared, both to virgins by maturity, and to widows by leisure (vacationem), until they are married, or until they are

“confirmed in their continence, who, if they could understand the weightiness of Baptism, would rather fear its administration than its delay : but, as it respects salvation, a sincere faith is perfectly secure.”—TERTULLIANI OPERA, ED. 1634, p. 263.

I trouble you with this long passage, because it is so decisive ; first, as to the design of Tertullian to connect faith, with Baptism in every case ; and, secondly, as to the delay of Baptism, until faith and consistency of character were, in some respects, secured. Tertullian was also a defender of the whole Christian Church, his Apology stands on record : and he, therefore, should be heard with the greater confidence. He had before *denounced* a voluntary rejection of Baptism, as though that ordinance was useless, and dispensable by human discretion. He now pleads for a *due care* in administering it. He does not say that it will confer a new principle of piety or faith ; but he would have the ordinance delayed, until that new principle of piety had been produced, by proper instruction, and by the blessing of God attending the dispensation of His word.

It is clear, therefore, that Baptism was hitherto regarded as a rational act of religious discipline, recognizing the faith, the privilege, and the personal responsibilities of those who received it. The change proposed was that of making it *a means of conveying grace* to believers first, then to persons who were sick unto death ; and afterwards to children, who, when born, appeared likely to die ; who, though they exercised no *faith*, yet it was conceived that they might enjoy the benefit, because they exerted no blasphemous or fatal *resistance* to the supposed ethereal communication.

It is important to notice the origin of this change.

You will remember that St. Paul speaks, in his Epistles, which were written to Timothy in Ephesus, a principal city of Asia Minor, of a system which he designates, "old wives' fables, and endless genealogies." The former is a phrase of contempt: the latter is a correct description of the theory here pointed out. It consisted in an attempt to explain the whole system of good and evil in the world, by an arranged system of natural generations. The Only-begotten of the Father was the first generated being: and from him proceeded, in various lines of lengthened descent, called "endless genealogies," all other created things, both good and evil. The unseen spirits were thus begotten, themselves first, and then employed in producing other things, some intended to destroy and others to restore. This system had been prevalent before the time of Christ. It was first consolidated into a system by the Persian Zoroaster, or Zerdusht; and the fragments of that system remain in a work, called *The Zend*, of which he is the reputed author. In early times, it was combined by many teachers with the Jewish system. In the time of Timothy, an effort was made in Ephesus to unite its theories with Christianity; and at the time of which we now speak, before and after the age of Tertullian, this same system was taught, in connexion with Christian doctrines, in Alexandria, in Egypt, and in different other parts of Africa. A very few words, selected with as great a regard to delicacy as possible, will be educed from a tract printed with the works of Clement of Alexandria, and intitled, "*An Abstract of the so-called Eastern Doctrines, collected from Valentinus and Theodotus*," who were two heretics, deservedly condemned

by the Church, and avowedly opposed and censured by both Clement and Tertullian.

The extracts, which are very short, I have selected and arranged in such a manner, as to show not only the nature of the system itself, but also the connexion of its leading idea with the subject of our investigation. The great objection of these teachers lay against the personal and intelligent nature of that system, by which the ancient Church and its teachers contended with the sinfulness and misery of this ruined world. The doctrine of Valentine is contend for Christian objects by Christian means. When we ask what is intended by Christian means? he and his system teach us that the only means of renovating mankind, is a seminal or vitalizing communication from God, through the Only-begotten. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Only-begotten of the Father, the Word, the Life, the Saviour, and he finds mankind in a spiritual sleep. When he comes near and touches them, he kindles within them a spark of fire, or life, and this wakes them out of sleep. This spark is called a male seed of the Only-begotten of the Father, an angelical juice, through which he who receives it, becomes both a living and a life-giving agent. All mankind are called by the gospel, but those who believe are chosen rather than the rest. This seed of the elect is a spark quickened by the Word, the Only-begotten, a sight to the eye, a grain of mustard seed, a little leaven, these things having seemed to share a generation uniting in the production of faith. You can easily see, from his play upon the figurative language of sacred Scripture, that his method, instead of obtaining its right use, must reduce it to absurdity ; by changing

all the work of mercy, from its spiritual and moral, to a merely physical character.

It is a very painful fact, that the discussions on this baptismal question have been pushed into ground, where it requires somewhat of temerity to follow the advocate. If I were to pursue the statements of Valentine, your delicacy could not endure the recital. This, however, is enough for our purpose. You can see his leading idea. Like the Eastern Magi, this teacher would reduce all the spiritual operations of mercy to repeated acts of physical generation. He labours to do away with the great duties of *hearing, thinking, believing, and resolving*, and strives to build the hopes of men on the operation of this *physical effluvium*, which has been variously called grace, and seed, and fire, and life ; and which is supposed to come without any forethought, or labour, to the sleeping sinner, as magnetic effluvium is given to a bar of iron, or as heat is made to penetrate a stone.

Observe, now, the connexion of this with Baptism. They affirmed the existence of two Baptisms, one sensible by water, which extinguished the fire of bodily lust ; and the other spiritual, which extinguished the fire of passion in the soul. But the change wrought in baptism, he says, relates not to the body, which rises from the Baptism unaltered, but to the soul. Immediately that it comes forth from the Baptism, it is a servant of God, and speaks to the unclean spirit, which shudders at the very person, into whom, but just before, that spirit would have carried its operations. For he who is baptised into God, hath migrated, passed over into God, and hath authority to walk over serpents and scorpions, which are the evil powers. And it is enjoined, he says,

on the apostles, "Go about, and preach and baptize
 " those who believe, into the name of the Father, and of
 " the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, into whom we have
 " been *new-born*, being made superior to all other
 " powers."*

Nothing has struck me so forcibly as the extreme exactness with which the language of the Oxford Tractarians, coincides with the language *used*, and the ideas carried out, by those two heretics whom I have named. In many instances, it is as if they had translated their words.†

You will please to observe here, that the actual profession of faith is still retained, even by these teachers as the *pre-requisite* of Baptism ; but the idea contended for by Valentine and his sect was, that in the Baptism, through the power of God, this ethereal effluvium called grace, fire, life, and so forth, was communicated to the person baptized, not without God, but by God, in Baptism, and through the Church, which was the elect seed, the ordained agency for communicating divine gifts, and for conducting divine operations upon earth. Indeed, the great object of this whole theory seems to have been, to turn the whole system of divine mercy into one of physical, official, and seminal processes.

These doctrines advocated by persons called Valentinians, from this Father, spread along the northern coast of Africa, from Alexandria, on the Nile, to the Straits of Gibraltar. They were opposed by Clement in Alexandria, and by Tertullian in Carthage ; and others of the Fathers, have given clear proof, that their views were not admitted as true, by the authorities most

* Note C.

† Note D.

esteemed by Christians at that time. The most extended view of this error will be found in Irenæus, on ancient heresies. Cyprian mentions the sect in company with five others, which he designates a pest of heretics. As being thus divided from the general community of Christians, Cyprian condemns them ; and I wish it were in my power to say that he was free from their delusion. The impossibility of this will be seen from one or two facts : when I have briefly sketched the leading character of him, and of the age in which he lived.

The first document to which I shall refer, was written about the year, 251 or 252. Under Decius, the Roman Emperor, a fierce persecution had then recently oppressed the Christian community. From this, the Church in Africa had suffered severely. Pestilence and famine were now increasing the general calamity, and another persecution was greatly dreaded. Parties interested in the heathen idolatry could not be satisfied without the use of violence towards the followers of Christ, and yet the government of the empire was weakened by internal disorder and disaffection. The Goths had crossed the Danube, and the Parthians had come down from the Caucasus, afflicting the European and Asiatic provinces, and threatening the security of Italy herself. It was a time of general consternation. The government was against the Church, and yet too weak to maintain its position. Cyprian was familiar with these elements of civil society, and was trained as an advocate at the bar to make the best of them. He therefore returned from his concealment : he urged a consolidation of the Christian societies, the use of tenderness towards the

erring, and vigour in the government of all ; that the people might be prepared to meet the coming tempest with their bishops. In fact, he evolved that principle of policy by which, at length, the Church rose above the emperor, and made the highest authorities subject to her law.

If the genius of Cyprian had displayed itself only in the use of Christian doctrines and ordinances, to render Christians as perfect as possible, and to multiply the cases of true conversion, his conduct would have deserved unqualified approbation. But this was not the fact. In order to accomplish his aim, he had recourse to means which were highly objectionable. He acted on the public mind by means of relics. One of his treatises is on the discovery of the head of John the Baptist. He used prodigies of a gross and foolish kind ; reported angelical appearances, legends, and a corrupt view and use of both the sacraments. In reading his writings, we seem to have been brought into contact with quite another system, than that with which we converse in the writings of Justin Martyr and the early Fathers. We no longer hear of the presiding brother, but of Bishops and Presbyters ; and a spirit of dictation breathes in his communications, which the apostles themselves would scarcely have exhibited. The genius of Popery had already been generated, and thenceforward it ceased not to unfold its mysterious resources, in criminality and spiritual oppression.

With respect to the Supper of our Lord, the words of Cyprian, exhibit a fearful approach to the doctrine of transubstantiation. He recommends the administration of the Eucharist, as a tutela or charm, to protec-

persons in danger ; and indicates an impossibility of safety without it. He affirms that it had the power of detecting concealed sins, by producing sickness and disease in those who received it without confession and forgiveness from the church. He gives an instance of a young female, who had committed some fault, and received the elements unconfessed, and thus became ill ; and he assigns as a reason, that the body and blood of the Lord God would not remain in polluted bowels. He gives, in deed, all the elements of that superstition, which has subsequently grown up in the Church of Rome, connected with its dreadful doctrine of transubstantiation.

The passages in his works, which relate to this subject, clearly involve the theory of sacramental grace, while the elements of the Eucharist are called “the body and blood of Christ,” in a way which indicates a decisive and wide departure from the views of the apostles. But as our attention is directed principally to the Sacrament of Baptism, we must be the more careful in verifying the idea of sacramental grace, in connection with that rite. As a general rule, therefore, he taught, that baptism should be administered to no one, unless he had been previously prepared by due instruction, and the developement of its results.—(*Works*, p. 289.) Hence his assertion. “(*Domino permittente primum baptismum credentibus dedimus;*) *The Lord permitting we administered “a first baptism to believers.”—Works*, p. 16. In this his rule agreed with the description of Justin, and the advice of Tertullian ;—but, that he entertained the Valentinian idea of a spiritual gift in baptism, is clearly proved both by his own words, and by those of his colleagues

of the council, holden at Carthage, in the year 253. In that council sixty-six bishops were convened. One of the questions submitted for their consideration was, whether the persons who were brought over from other congregations to theirs, should be *re-baptized*. In this discussion it was assumed, that they, the council, were *the Church*, and that all the other congregations were *heretics*. It was also assumed that they, the Church, as they esteemed themselves, and wished to be esteemed, had power by a divine appointment and operation, to give the Holy Spirit in Baptism. On the contrary it was assumed, that heretics had no such power to give the Holy Spirit in baptism, because they never had it in themselves ; whence it was concluded, that they could never give what they never had. The assembled bishops gave their votes *seriatim*, and many of their individual opinions are recorded in their own words, and with their names attached. In some particulars they differ : but they all agree in assuming that they, *the Church*, who had the Holy Spirit, could communicate it in baptism ; and that *heretics*, who had *not* the Holy Spirit, could never confer it, and, therefore, that it was necessary for every one, converted from their congregations, to be re-baptized in order that he might be saved. — *Works*, pp. 219, 226.*

But this power, which they assumed, extended not only to the communication of a spiritual effluvia to the person baptized, but also to the water itself. Hence it was argued in that Council, that *as the benediction of a true bishop in the Church sanctified the water, that it might have power to remove sin, so the benediction of a heretic*

* Note E.

polluted the water, making it impart to the person baptized a deeper defilement.—Ibid.

The importance attached to this spiritual gift in baptism, and to the peace or forgiveness of the Church, which it was designed to convey, was considered so great, that salvation could not be obtained without it. I would not venture to make this affirmation, if the fact were not determined in several most important practical cases.

First, in the case of *heretics* converted to the *true* Church, they declared this baptismal gift necessary to salvation, as we have just seen.

Secondly, in the case of *sick persons*, who repented on the bed of death, this baptismal gift was declared to be necessary to salvation; and since they were too feeble to undergo the ordinary immersion, Cyprian allowed the ceremony to be changed into sprinkling, that they might not perish through the want of the grace which baptism was thus to communicate.—*Works*, p. 188.

Thirdly, in the case of *martyrs*, who suffered without being baptized, it was declared to be so needful, that without this baptismal gift, they could not be saved, although baptized in their own blood.

Fourthly, in the case of *new born infants who appeared likely to die*, it was declared to be needful; and hence, breaking his own rule of not baptizing any one without due preparation, he ordered the baptism of such, that they might be saved. The principle on which he reasoned, as he states it, is, that nothing which God has formed in the human womb, ought to be excluded from the grace of this Sacrament.—*Works*, p. 137.

Such were his views: and in following them out, the Church, which had thus decreed, soon extended her

clemency, not to children merely, but to monsters and abortions; and infants were taken from their dead or dying mothers to be baptized, that they also might be saved.

But are we to consider that Cyprian and his associates were sinners above all mankind, in this particular? By no means. In the earliest age of man, the simple forms of patriarchal worship were first bereft of faith, and the spirit of devotion, and then corrupted into heathen rites, and profane blasphemies. Thus originated all the heathen idolatries upon earth. The Mosaical institutions suffered a similar abuse. Formality deprived them of their spirit and worth; and leaning on the circumcision in their flesh, the Jews became uncircumcised in heart. Their sweet and magnificent prophetic dispensations were all corrupted in the same way, until those to whom the oracles of Heaven were committed, became prepared to crucify their own predicted Messiah. The Christian institutions have fallen, by the same corrupt inclination of the human heart. Formality has destroyed every other dispensation of mercy given to mankind; and it aims at the destruction of this. It placed the ceremony, instead of personal faith and piety, as the hope of man. It proceeded so rapidly, from the time of Cyprian, that in 438, another council of Carthage decreed that, whenever a child was found, of whose baptism no sufficient testimonial could be obtained, the bishop of the district should baptize him, that he might not perish. In 929, Leo the Sixth issued an order to the same effect, from Rome, which had now risen to the greatest episcopal eminence; and the effect of these orders on the public mind was so great, that, by first regarding the

spiritual gift of baptism as necessary to salvation, they came to consider it as altogether *sufficient*. The Church thus lost her influence, by the very means through which she sought to increase it ; and hence her care, in after times, to make it appear that, though baptism was necessary to salvation, it was not sufficient, unless the person baptized became obedient to the Church in *all* things, and was nourished by the grace of *all* her sacraments.

This, then, is the verdict of the ancient Fathers, respecting the origin both of Baptismal Regeneration, and the baptism of infants, with which that theory has been combined. The first sprang out of the Asiatic philosophy, through Valentine, and became adopted by Cyprian, as a means of leading the people ; and the latter was adopted as a means of conveying the supposed baptismal benefit to children, and even to abortions. This, also, is a fact, that when these errors became authorized, the whole authority of Rome was reposed upon this sacramental error, as the chief, if not the only basis of its support.

I am far from thinking that these changes are to be ascribed to the dishonesty of any one individual, though some have contributed more than others to produce them. From the age of Cyprian, to that in which, after the revival of letters, the Council of Trent was convened, we must consider the Church as labouring under immense difficulties. The inroads of barbarians, which passed over the whole face of civilized society, presented to the teachers of Christianity, a people, rude, fierce, and averse to the study of letters. They could only be affected through their senses. Hence, instead of the preaching

of Christ, which could have but little effect upon them, the teachers of Christianity adopted the plan of *exhibiting* such events as were most important to be known in the history of the Redeemer. The central or cathedral churches were hence constructed on the plan of the ancient theatre. This plan is still to be traced in the construction of St. Paul's. The altar was the model of its stage. Here, especially, the Crucifixion was exhibited as a stage play ; and this became eventually called the Mass, and took the place of the ancient and simple ordinance of the Lord's Supper. It was easy to give this the name of an actual sacrifice ; and, when the idea of transubstantiation was fully evolved, the reception of it was called the sacrament of nutrition. By the Baptism, sinners were said to be regenerated and made sons of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ; and by receiving the Eucharist at the altar of the Mass, they were afterwards supposed to be supported and nourished. This sacrifice of the mass, too, was the atonement for their sins committed after Baptism. One idea ran through the whole system. It was that of sacramental grace. To raise it in the estimation of the multitude, all kinds of media were employed : legends were fabricated, miracles were counterfeited, relics were gathered, timber was collected, as pieces of the true Cross, sufficient to construct a ship of war. Heathen customs were adopted, and pressed into the service of this great delusion. Those who resisted, were condemned and slaughtered. The activities of violence changed hands ; and those who succeeded, by descent, to the first martyrs, became the authors of more cruelty and bloodshed than ever blackened the history of heathen persecution. In

teaching the truth, the Church had real difficulties to surmount : but when she had departed from the truth, and built her whole polity upon a sacramental forgery, her difficulties multiplied beyond all control ; and though the wealth, and armies, and thrones of many nations were at her command, yet the discovery of a few books convulsed all Europe with the Reformation, and split the whole fabric of her power, from its coping stone to the foundation thereof.

That step which, in the allwise mystery of a permissive Providence, was destined to push this spiritual oppression beyond the power of endurance, consisted in extending this power of conferring sacramental benefits to the unseen world. It was not sufficient for them to rivet the fetters of spiritual oppression on their victim, in Baptism at his birth, and continue it through all the relations of life, in sickness and in health, to the moment of mortality ; but the power of the priesthood followed the departed sinner into purgatory, and reigned over the living by awakening compassion for the dead. At length followed a recoil, which threatened the whole ecclesiastical power with utter annihilation. In Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain, the Netherlands, England, and Italy itself, the convulsion was felt in various forms, and with various results ; and all things conspired to produce the greatest possible effort of self-defence. Never was the genius of human nature more wonderfully displayed, and never were its energies more flagitiously misapplied.

The three great means at that time employed, in defence of sacramental power, now technically designated Popery, were *legalized persecution, war, and negociation.*

Of the first, we have a melancholy specimen in the Inquisition, whose records appear to differ from the history of a common slaughter-house only in this, that, in the latter, a kind of humanity is observed, in speedily despatching the creatures which are slain, but, in the acts of the Inquisition, death appears connected with inconceivable and lengthened torture. Of *war*, the second means employed in its defence, a painful example is given in the thirty years' conflict of Germany, which found its provinces occupied by *sixteen millions* of inhabitants, and left it at the end of thirty years with only *four millions*, reducing its population in those thirty years to less than one-fourth. On these records of slaughter, I can spend no time; I rather pass to a most striking example of the third means of defence, which is supplied in the Council of Trent, in which we are to consider,—

Thirdly, *The revised declaration of this Sacramental error by the Church of Rome.*

That important assembly was convened by a Bull from Pope Paul the Third, in 1536. It met first in Vicenza, and afterwards continued its sessions with various interruptions at Trent, a town in the skirts of Switzerland. There it met from 1545 till 1563, a period of about eighteen years. It must be regarded altogether in the light of a *defensive* measure. It was granted to the disputants with great reluctance. It was governed by profound intrigue, and it terminated in drawing the line of separation between the Papistical and Protestant Churches, with more definitiveness than ever. It did nothing to reconcile, and little to reform: but it left an authorized statement of papal doctrine; and from that time to this, the sacramental dominion of the Papal See

has become increasingly absolute wherever it is acknowledged ; while the error on which that dominion rests, is still exhibiting its pernicious results in what form soever it has been retained by her opponents.

On this part of our subject we need not detain you long. The error in question is affirmed by the Council of Trent, in its decrees, canons, and anathemas, which relate to the nature of sacraments in general, to baptism in particular, and to justification ; of which baptism, is said to be the instrumental cause. Baptism is conceded also to *infants*, and the communication of grace by this sacrament, is said to be *invariable* on God's part : and finally, this is said to be given *ex opere operato*, and not *ex opere operantis* ; that is, by the sacrament administered, and not depending on the priest who administers it. But since there is no attempt whatever on the part of that Church to hide this view, we have no farther need of proof. The great peculiarity of Rome is, that she claims for herself the sole right and power of conferring this gift, by baptism, in all the earth. It is an universal monopoly of " sacramental grace ;" and she declares every one to be accursed, who denies this right and power in any form whatever. There is no need, therefore, of farther proof.

The fourth particular that I named in the outline of this lecture, is *The retaining of the same error in the Reformed Churches*. As far as those of Germany and England are concerned, there needs no laborious proof, for the reason that I have just mentioned with respect to Rome. The Lutheran Church makes no secret of the fact. She declares it in her confessions of faith and in her ritual ; but, with this difference, that she does not claim this

power exclusively. Rome, when consistent with herself, must deny this power in Luther, or in any other ; but Luther, in claiming it himself, is not compelled by his theory to deny this sacramental power to Rome. In other respects the difference amounts to nothing but a question of words.

This is equally true with respect to the Reformed Church of England. She has adopted so nearly the words of the Romish ritual, that it is impossible she should not have retained the sacramental error of Rome. It was clearly avowed by Cranmer, in the same year in which the ritual was issued by authority ; and not only was the doctrine so avowed, it is retained in her articles still. It is now taught in high places, and by her highest authorities. Objections brought against Baptismal Regeneration were heard in 1661, in the Conference holden at the Savoy ; and they were there rejected ; because the delegated authorities avowed their belief in the sentiment as right in itself, and as essential to the constitution of their Church. She has declared also, that the Regeneration is invariable, and not *ex opere operantis*, depending for its effect on the minister who baptized : but *ex opere operato*, depending on the baptism itself, through which, (in the same way as stated by the Church of Rome,) God, the Holy Spirit, is said by *them* to bestow this heavenly gift on Infants, as well as on adults. The only point in which the Church of England differs from that of Rome is, in denying to Rome her claim to universal administration, and in claiming for herself the sole right and power of regenerating within the British dominions.

This fact cannot be more fully expressed than it is

in the following passage, from a Charge, lately delivered by the Lord Bishop of London.

“In this country the clergy of the Established Church, and they alone are entitled to the respect and obedience of the people, as their lawful guides and governors in spiritual things. They alone are duly commissioned to preach the word of God, and to minister His holy sacraments.”—“It is *ours* to realize instrumentally to those for whom Christ died, the blessings of which the Levitical Priesthood administered only the shadows. It is *ours* to graft them into the body of Christ’s Church, to initiate them into the saving truths of the gospel, to turn their hearts to the wisdom of the just, guiding them to Him who alone can deliver them from the bondage of sin, declaring as His ambassadors, remission and assurance of pardon ; and dispensing to His household the spiritual food and sustenance of His body and blood ; to *do all this*, and on that account to *have the chief stations* in that household, to be entitled to the attention and respect of all who belong thereto.”—*Charge delivered in St. Paul’s, on Monday, October the 10th, 1842 ; pp. 6, and 9, of the 7th edition.*

I do not therefore think by any means that the Tractarians of Oxford are to be condemned for inconsistency. I hold them to be the most full and candid expositors of the doctrines of the Church of England ; for we find again in the same Charge delivered by the Lord Bishop of London, the following words :

“The doctrine of our own church, as to the Christian’s spiritual life, has always appeared to me to be this ; justification begins in baptism, when the children of wrath are regenerated by water and the Holy Ghost, and are made the children of God. Remission of sins is expressly declared to be *then* given, and remission of sins implies justification, in the proper sense of the term. Grace is also then given, and by virtue of that grace the person receiving it, and thenceforth using and improving it, continues to believe

“ in the atonement made by Jesus Christ, and to seek for, “ and realize the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and to be “ renewed day by day, in the inner man. As long as he “ does this he continues in a state of justification ; his sins, “ which cleave even to the regenerate, are forgiven, as they “ are repented of and forsaken ; and the work of sanctification goes on.”—*Ibid.* p. 17.

It is less needful for me to detain you here, as the tracts circulated by “ Aquila” and “ Presbyter,” in your own town, afford irrefragable testimony to the fact ; and if they had failed in anything, ample information was supplied by the Rev. Mr. Scott, in his lecture, recently delivered on that particular subject, which I heard with very great pleasure.

The question now to be considered, is, in what direction may we trace the descent of this dogma, to the present time ? I suppose that, with the ample evidence issued from Oxford, we need not stay to prove that the Church of England, having retained the theory, has been one means of securing its preservation. Whatever be its value, she will justly claim her portion of the praise, due for its present existence and effects. But she must not monopolize the whole ; another claim must be admitted, in favour of the Westminster Assembly.

That illustrious body of divines was convened in July, 1643, and sat, with various intervals, until March, 1652, a period of about nine years and-a-half.* They dispersed on the very day when Cromwell expelled the Long Parliament from the House. “ The Assembly of Divines,” therefore, may, and ought to be, identified with that body of legislators. It was their organ for religious purposes ; on that Parliament it was dependent

* *Note E.*

for its entire support ; and to the voice of that Parliament it was most courteously obedient. Moreover, several of the persons who sat in that Assembly were also engaged in the Conference for reconciliation, holden at the Savoy, in 1661, after the restoration of Charles II. ; and the documents which were issued by them on these two occasions, form the earliest, if not the only that may be called *authorities* in the Non-Conforming body. To bring out their views, so far as needful for our purpose, will require but a very few words.

As the Assembly, and the parties in the Conference were moving in nearly the same sphere of society with their opponents, it is to be expected that they would state their own views with more distinctness than we can. In their list of objectionable parts of the ritual of the English Church, which had then been restored, the Non-Conformists mention eight ; of which, the fourth is as follows. “ That ministers be obliged to pronounce “ all baptized persons regenerated by the Holy Ghost, “ *whether they be the children of Christians or not.*” This they said, was flatly opposed to the word of God. You may find all the eight particulars, in Neal’s *History of the Puritans*, vol. iii. p. 88.

It is quite plain, from the words I have made emphatic, that their whole discussion with the Episcopalians on this statement, must turn on the questions respecting an *invariable* regeneration in Baptism, and the right of others to that sacrament, besides the children of Christians. Thus much, also, ought, in justice to be said upon the case, that the question of holding or rejecting the error of baptismal grace, was never submitted to the Episcopalians in that Conference.

Other terms were preferred to that of "regeneration," but the idea was retained by the objectors; and, in all probability, much of their failure resulted from this fact; for the alteration they required would mar the machinery of the Church, but not correct her principles. It was a question of *words* and of *appropriation*, more than of principle; and it still remains a matter of very serious doubt, whether their proposed alterations could have been an improvement. If the ordinance had been confined to the children of believers, there is abundance of proof that the use of the word "regeneration" might have been allowed, by the strongest of the objectors.

My authority for this statement, though brief, is (I hope) sufficiently conclusive to satisfy every inquirer; but if any think it insufficient, when this course of Lectures is ended, I will meet the demand for evidence, *ad satietatem*.

The first proof that these Non-conformists held the doctrine of "*a spiritual gift in Baptism*," and might have used the word "Regeneration" in reference to it, may be found in the 28th chapter of the *Assembly's Confession of Faith*, which is as follows:—

"That Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of Regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life."

With such an article in their Confession, to reject the word "Regeneration" in a ritual, was little more than trifling; especially when, besides affirming that in every sacrament there is *a sacramental union* between the sign

and the benefit signified, they also state, that "*The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation.*" The Church of Rome says, the instrumental cause, but they say :—

"The Sacraments become *effectual* means of salvation, not "by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from piety "and intention of him by whom they are administered ; but "only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of "Christ, by whom they are instituted."—*Larger Catechism.*

The grace, therefore, or gift in Baptism, which they affirm, must be, as in the case of Rome, not *ex opere operantis*, from the minister, but *ex opere operato*, from the ordinance itself, by the working of the Holy Spirit ; which latter was called by the council of Trent, "the efficient cause of "justification," whilst Baptism was the instrumental cause :—

Moreover, it is added, that :—

"The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of "time wherein it is administered, yet, notwithstanding, by "the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not "only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred by the "Holy Spirit, to such, (whether of age, or infants,) as that "grace belongeth unto, according to the council of God's "own will, in His appointed time."—*Confession of Faith*, Chap. xxviii. Sec. 6.

There is also one other point in which the Assembly agrees with the modern Puseyites, in differing from writers of the darkest ages. Baptism was at an early period urged, on the pain of everlasting ruin, as if no man could be saved without it. This is more cautiously stated by modern writers, even of Rome. The Tractarians also say, that all unbaptized persons are left to the uncovenanted mercies of God ; and the Assembly of Divines affirm that :—

“Although it is a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or, that all that are baptized, are undoubtedly regenerated.” — *Confession of Faith*, Chap. xxviii. Sec. 5.

This, then, is all we need. If that Assembly differ in any material point from the Romish and Reformed Episcopalian Churches, as far as this subject is concerned, it will be found, not in their denying the bestowment of “*a spiritual gift in Baptism*,” but in their choosing other expressions to describe it, rather than that of “Regeneration ;” and in their holding that the communication of this grace was *not invariable* in the administration of the Sacrament. They contended that the sacramental *sign* should be administered to *all* the children of believers, but that the sacramental *gift* was conveyed *only* to such of those children as were *the objects of divine and sovereign election*. By this they endeavoured to escape some difficulties; but they plunged into others which involved their whole system in contradictions almost infinite, and in consequences which cannot be too deeply deplored.

The student of their documents will find that the Assembly of divines has left an ample supply of materials, to explain that decided revulsion of feeling, which followed the Restoration, towards all that had been undertaken and performed by them. They were great and good men, but their aim was fatal to their effort. They bruised the surface of spiritual tyranny, but they did not wound its heart. Their axe was not laid at the root of the evil. Into what hands so ever the ecclesiastical power might pass, this sacramental dogma must always have precisely the same effect. By their scheme it was

made more contemptible, but not less pernicious : the prayers and exhortations of their Directory, as constructed for use in the administration of Baptism, are even *more* delusive than the ritual of the Established church ; and, as far as their legitimate effects have been developed, those effects are not less to be deplored.

Since the Westminster Assembly, as far as we can learn, no authoritative document has been issued by the body of Non-conformists in England. Individual authors of great merit exist in abundance ; but to obtain from them any thing like an uniform statement of this Baptismal grace, is utterly impracticable. They not only differ from each other, but often appear to exhaust their mighty strength, in struggling with the legitimate results of their own instructions. We every where find them in conflict with an element, which they have neither fortitude to resign, nor power to subjugate. By aiming to meet the undefined and general inclination of the human heart to this heresy, they are ever betrayed into the use of statements, that astonishingly approach to this great element of Popery, which they all profess to abjure ; and, yet, when they have made the concession, they shrink from and shudder at the result, as boys who have approached the verge of a precipice. It is to this, that we must ascribe the modern revival of Papal doctrine and influence, in the British empire. Men are prepared for it, by this circulation of the virus out of which it springs. While the views of Baptismal benefits, now taught in England, are maintained by the clergy, and by the teachers of so many churches, to resist the advances of Rome will be impossible. Men may call her hard names as long as they please ; yet, with a bold front, and

haughty bearing, she will still, and successfully, prosecute her design.

The great family of authors, to which this remark will apply, may be divided into three classes ; one representing the Independents of America, the other the Church of Scotland, and, the last, the Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists of England. With diverse variations, these all hold the sentiment in question in nearly the same sense with the Westminster Assembly. The variations appear not in the works designed for ordinary teaching, but in those which are produced as means of defence. One might think that many had but little care what notion prevailed with the people, until, by some accident or other, the whole theory came to be in absolute danger. When roused to action by such events, they rush to the breach made in their defences, and maintain their position with whatever comes to hand. It would involve something like a want of candour, to attribute to the body all that, in such efforts, is written by individuals. But when they are dealing with the moral consequences of their own statements, that which they admit must be received in evidence. Such is the case with Richard Baxter, who was engaged in the Savoy Conference. He then objected, as I have shewn, to one application of the word "regeneration," in the ritual : but he affirms, in his Catechism,

"That, as children are made sinners and miserable by their parents, without any act of their own, so they are delivered out of it by the free grace of Christ, upon a condition performed by their parents."—*Works*, Vol. xix. p. 264.

This "condition" is their Baptism : of which, in his Directory, he says :

“ It is very true that you were sacramentally regenerate in baptism ; and all that are the children of promise, and have that promise sealed to them in Baptism, are regenerate.”—*Works*, Vol. ii. p. 17. *And again*, “ All that the minister warrantably baptizeth are sacramentally regenerate, and are in (foro ecclesiæ) members of Christ, and children of God, and heirs of heaven.” *Works*, Vol. v. p. 46.

In precisely the same way, and with equal force, I might confirm the view I have given of the Westminster Assembly, by selections from Dr. Lightfoot, Dr. Featly, and Dr. Manton, who were members of that body, and from Dr. Owen, and Dr. Ridgley who has written an extended exposition and defence of the Assembly's larger Catechism. Of those which represent the American Pædo-Baptists, I might take, with equal success, the works of Edwards, of Dwight, and Dr. Millar. With all allowance due to the habits of their country, they follow the Assembly of Westminster, and retain the supposed spiritual gift in Baptism. But the most clear effect of the Assembly's doctrine, has been shown in the Church of Scotland. A pastoral letter, addressed by the Presbytery in London, to the baptized of the Scottish Church, in, I think, about 1828, contains these words :

“ We do in faithfulness remind you of all the privileges which you have in Christ Jesus, through virtue of that Baptismal Covenant into which you were introduced by the piety of your fathers, whereby you were made partakers of all the blessings of the new covenant, all your sins being covered and remitted.”*

About the same time, the Rev. Edward Irving, then a member of that presbytery, published “ An Apology for the ancient fulness and purity of the Kirk of Scotland,” in which are these words —

* *Note F.*

“Our Reformers maintained that the Sacraments, to every true receiver of them, conveyed the grace of the Holy Spirit signified in Baptism, and the grace of communion with, and sustenance by Christ’s risen body, signified in the Lord’s Supper ; insomuch, that every one who receiveth these sacraments, is responsible to God for all the grace therein contained ; whereof if he be found lacking or destitute, he is so found, not because the vessel was empty which he lifted to his lips, but because, though full, he had no knowledge, no faith, or no desire to partake the precious water of the present, and the joyous wine of the future dispensation, but did spill them on the ground, and trample the holy emblems with the holy things therein contained under his profane foot.”—*Apology, &c.* p. 13.

These, you will observe, are only frank expositions of the sentiments held and taught in the Westminster Assembly. But the idea of which we speak, may be detected in another way. The modern defenders of Infant Baptism, for the most part, prefer contending for the *right* of infants, or the children of believers, to Christian Baptism. I speak of the popular position adopted in all the pamphleteering of the age ; it is nearly all put in that way. They plead for the right of infants, or the children of believers, to Christian Baptism. Now, what are we to understand by a *right* ? Is it not a claim to some good, in the enjoyment of which we are to be protected by a just administration of the law ? Such, I understand by the term “right.” If so, then, what is the good which infants find in Baptism ? For, since they have a right to it, and it is a wrong to withhold it, there must be a good in it, or the right is a right to nothing. It is plain, therefore, that this notion of Baptismal grace, confessed or not confessed, has still been retained, wherever the Baptism of infants is *thus* defended.

But it might be asked, why all this labour to trace the origin and descent of this dogma to the present time? I answer, it was necessary to prepare us for the appeal to Scripture. You have seen with what diversity of methods it has been stated and defended, and the question has its peculiarity in the present time. First, many hold it, and yet deny the charge; and many plead for it when other objects are to be gained than that which they avow; and now, also, we have the representatives of every ancient advocate, co-existing, and conflicting with each other on the point. The first advocates of this Baptismal gift, such as Valentine and his adherents, had to contend with the ancient orthodox Church, and pleaded for their theory, in the face of her severest condemnation. Cyprian had to act upon the Church, and the heretics too; he condemned them, while he beguiled her to retain the error which they taught. The Papacy had its opponents in every country subjected to its power. The Reformers opposed the Papists, and the Non-conformists opposed the Episcopalians. But now all are combined, and brought into collision with each other; each party claiming faith in a Baptismal benefit, yet each assuming a peculiar advantage to itself. The Romanist pleads that he is not heathen, but Christ's agent in administering Baptismal grace; and yet the right for which he pleads resembles more the washing in a heathen temple, as described by Aristophanes, than the sacramental compact administered by the Apostles of Christ. The Reformed Episcopalians abhor the *opus operatum* of Popery and seem to burst with spleen when it is attributed to them; yet they plead for precisely the same thing

with that which they condemn. The Tractarians denounce Popery with ostentatious zeal ; and yet, with a frankness above all praise, show, that the vital element of Popery is the life of their own Church, discipline, and power. The Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists denounce what they call the hateful doctrine of the Tractarians ; and yet, they not only retain the principle of Baptismal grace, for which the Tractarians plead, but often assert it with less regard to scriptural language and discretion. Before we can conduct an appeal to Scripture, in such a case, it is necessary to know the character of the appellants, and the nature of the case on which we have to decide. Let us understand, first, with whom and what we are dealing, that we may with propriety approach the tribunal to which these advocates have appealed.

All that relates to the fifth particular, I mean *The revival of this discussion in the present day*, may be comprehended under two remarks. First, *the peculiar character of the times* has rendered the maintenance of this dogma far more difficult than at any former period. Brethren, the Bible is abroad, and though the version that we use is so made, as to give an unjust support to this, and kindred subjects ; yet the general study of its pages has had, and must have, a prodigious effect upon the public mind. The advocates of every sentiment, not directly supported by its injunction, will, through these means, be forced to activity and invention. Hence results a fact observed and used by the Tractarians. They say that it is less safe to rely on modern than on ancient criticism. In many cases this may be supported with justice, and in none more than in the case before us. It will be hard to find a more extensive and gross per-

version of Sacred Scripture, even in the firmest advocates of Popery, through the darkest age, than is constantly issuing from the English press, in order to maintain this Baptismal grace and the rite of Infant Baptism. I may mention, as a splendid instance of this, a few papers, which have recently appeared in successive numbers of the Congregational Magazine, relating to Baptism, as received and administered in the ancient Church.

Moreover, there is one event which has tended to rouse the energies of the Established Church in particular. The advance of general religious education, and the spread of dissent, have had their effect, no doubt : but these have been far more influential, since the passing of the new Registration Act.

You see here a little hand-bill. It is published by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge ; it was issued in 1840 ; it is marked, " No. 191,"—it is headed, " Registration and Baptism." It is addressed, " From the Minister of the Parish to Christian Parents," The words are these :—

" As it is now made by law, the duty of the Registrar to
" register the birth of every child in his district, I think it
" my duty to caution you against a strange notion which
" sometimes prevails, that this registration of the *birth* does
" away with the necessity of *Baptism* ; and to remind you
" that your duty to bring your child to be christened—that
" is, made a member of the Church of Christ, by the holy
" sacrament of Baptism, remains altogether unchanged.
" Remember, that all human beings are born in sin, and
" that a child, until it is baptized, remains in a heathen
" state ; is not a member of the Church of Christ ; has no
" part in the blessings purchased for us by Him ; is not a
" partaker in the privileges and hopes of the Gospel ; nor
" an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. I earnestly,
" therefore, and affectionately exhort you, that you will

“ not be guilty of such neglect towards your infant, as to
 “ deprive it of the inestimable blessings which are derived
 “ from admission into the Church of Christ by the sacra-
 “ ment of Baptism ; but that you will not delay to present
 “ it at the holy font for that purpose.”

It was foreseen, from the construction of that Act, (I may say, by the very individual who suggested its arrangements, in conference with Lord John Russell) that this would remove one reason for carrying multitudes to the Church.* Hence, the legal influence being lost, arising from its value in a court of law, where the register of the Church was necessary, in order to secure our titles to estates ; a more important energy has been found in the prominent idea of Baptismal Regeneration. I do not say it was invented for the occasion, it existed before ; and I do not blame the activity in urging it which now prevails. If it be true, let it be taught ; let it not only be taught, but let it be received ; let the occasion from this activity be known also, that we may judge rightly ; and, if the doctrine be found otherwise than true, the sooner an active investigation explodes the heresy, the better. I rather feel encouraged by the event, therefore, because I am persuaded that nothing is so fatal to the interests of piety as supineness, and whatever the trial that may lie before us, truth in the hands of an omnipotent Redeemer, must, in the end, prevail.

Long though I have detained, and I fear fatigued your attention, it would be quite unjust to close this lecture without one acknowledgment in favour of the principal advocates in the subject under inquiry. It must be acknowledged, in favour of the Tractarians, that

* *Note G.*

in making their appeal to Sacred Scripture, they have adopted more soundness of principle, and more directness of method, than any that have yet come to this investigation. The Church of Rome flies by instinct into her councils and traditions, as hunted game fly to their cover. The Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists have evinced a timidity and feebleness, which is ever too much excited to deliberate deeply ; and so given to change, that we never can find a starting point with them, that does not lie in the circumference of a circle, which cannot by possibility advance farther than its own revolution. But the Tractarians, and your townsmen, have appealed to Scripture in behalf of their views, in a way that must, if pressed, lead to a conclusion. It was this which encouraged me to undertake this task, and still encourages me to hope that your attendance will be yet continued until the task has been completed.

The appeal to Scripture, which has been made by the advocates of this doctrine, will be considered in the next Exercise. I have now only to thank you, most sincerely, for the stedfast, lengthened, and kind attention of this evening.

LECTURE III

ON THE SUPPORT WHICH BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, AND
ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS ARE SUPPOSED TO DERIVE FROM
SACRED SCRIPTURE.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, we shall now consider the support which Baptismal Regeneration, and its attendant errors, are supposed to derive from the Sacred Scripture.

But, in the last exercise, one fact of great importance was omitted. It was then shown, that the idea of a material or galvanic effluvium—in the Christian sacraments, was traceable, through Cyprian and Valentine, to the Eastern philosophy : which, partly from the name of its teachers, “Magi,” and partly from its general effort to find out and use occult causes, gave rise to the name, “Magic,” and to the system so designated during the dark ages ; and, even after the revival of letters in Europe. The most important production of that school is our modern science of chemistry ; among the most ridiculous, were, the search after a stone or substance, supposed to be able to change all kinds of metals into gold, and the compounding of an elixir that should make mankind immortal. It was the rule of that body, to seek for essences and seed in everything. Like the followers of Isis and Osiris, in Egypt, they hunted for processes of generation, both in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, in the sea, and in all things that are therein ; and they sought, and seemed to find, a generating

essence of grace in the sacraments and institutions of the Christian religion.

But it was not then stated that, after this theory had been introduced into the Christian Church, the ancient number of the sacraments was not deemed sufficient for dispensing its supposed benefits. Having associated the idea with Baptism, at the birth, it was thought well to unite it with Confirmation. It was then added to Marriage, that this interesting relationship might not be without its advantage: then, the idea was combined with Ordination, that the clergy might have its benefits. The Eucharist was supposed to be retained in the service of the mass, where the dogma of transubstantiation exhibited the prevalence of this heresy over all truth: Confession was thought a healthful appendage; and Extreme Unction, seemed essential to complete the exhibition of this chemical, or rather *chimerical*, remedy for the souls of men.

It is worth while for Englishmen to consider deeply, how the expanding generosity of the ancient Church, in opening her stalls for vending this precious element called "grace," agrees with the system now spreading so rapidly over this nation. The present Lord Bishop of London, has not only declared the reality of such a communication in the Baptism of his Church; but he has also associated the idea with the ceremony of Marriage. While compelled to acknowledge the marriages of Dissenters, as valid in law, he actually designates them, *marriages without grace*; and makes them, ecclesiastically, nothing more than another kind of adultery. With a *finesse*, which is execrable in one holding his station, and in the act of delivering a charge to his

clergy, he says, "*We are not to declare, by any act of ours, that parties so married are living in a state of concubinage. If such a marriage be without spiritual grace, which the Church connects with matrimony when duly solemnized, the parties have deprived themselves of it by their own act, and we are not to remedy it by an irregular procedure of ours.*"—(Charge delivered at the Visitation, in October, 1842 ; and reported in the *Essex Herald*, of October 25, 1842.)*

This is too bad. If the Prelate chose to degrade, thus, so large a class of her Majesty's subjects, he ought to have done it directly. But, I could venture to submit the whole controversy, respecting this magical communication, to the experimental proof resulting in that relationship. Let the marriages of Dissenters be taken as they run, graceless as they may be ; then, let them be compared with those celebrated in the Church ; and, let his Lordship show, in what the latter have the advantage. If it be found, that persons married by ordained clergymen are more faithful to each other, more tender-hearted in affliction, more pure in their conversation and deportment, more constant in affection, that they turn the relationship itself to better account, that they have more, or better children, or care for them more scrupulously in after life : we shall be glad to know it. If his Lordship will show *one single point*, in which the grace communicated by his Church in marriage has made its recipients better, in body or in soul ; I am content to give him all the argument, in favour of his power to bestow the same grace in Baptism. But, in the mean time, an appeal hath been made to Sacred Scripture ; which is now to be particularly examined.

* *Note H.*

You will please, however, to observe, that this appeal to scriptural authority is made, not in favour of Water Baptism, as a Christian rite ; no party herein concerned denies this : nor is the appeal made in favour of its obligation, for that which the Lord so positively commands, the parties consider ought, most certainly, to be obeyed : nor is the appeal made by the Tractarians on behalf of the Baptism of Infants ; for the decisive obligation of this practice, is, by all the advocates of modern Baptismal Regeneration, and Baptismal Gifts, taken for granted, whether it be right or wrong. Moreover, the appeal is not made in favour of every kind of benefit, supposed to be connected with this assumed duty of baptizing infants ; for those advocates of that ceremony, who oppose Baptismal Regeneration, plead, at the same time, for benefits variously stated to be derived from the same source. Lastly, this appeal is not made in favour of the operation of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, for it has been shown that Papists, Episcopalians, and Non-conformists, all recognize His agency in whatever benefits they ascribe to this rite. But the question, which they wish to decide, is altogether one of *degree*. The Tractarians say, that their opponents, that is, *their Pædo-Baptistical opponents*, “ *lower the fulness of scripture truth,*” in denying the Regeneration in Baptism for which they plead ; and, to justify this charge, as well as to support their own practice, they have most solemnly appealed to the word of God, as to the highest possible authority.

The principal passages used by them, and now to be considered, are Rom. vi. 3—13 ; Gal. iii. 27 ; Col. ii. 10—15 ; and 1 Cor. xv. 29 ; which state the condition

of persons who were baptized in the Apostles' time : 1 Cor. x. 1—15 ; 1 Peter iii. 20—22 ; and Acts xix. 1—7 ; which supply illustrations of that condition : Matth. xxviii. 19, 20 ; and John i. 11, 12 ; which state the law of baptism : and Acts ii. 37 ; x. 34—48 ; viii. 4—24, 25—40 ; xi. 1—18 ; with Matth. iii. 1—17 ; which afford examples to elucidate that law. Most of these passages have been selected by the advocates of Baptismal Regeneration themselves, and used by them to support their theory. The argument, which they found on these premises, is briefly as follows :—All children are alike born in sin, and, by nature, children of wrath : and, they are proper subjects of Baptism. But, in these passages, all baptized persons are spoken of as children of God, and inheritors of salvation by Christ. It is never said that they must be regenerated *after* having been baptized ; and infants could not have been regenerated *before* they were baptized : hence they infer, that they must be regenerated *when* baptized, or *in* baptism ; which is Baptismal Regeneration. This, they say, is a mystery, which we are not to explain, but which is to be received by faith on the authority of these passages in the word of God.

Let us now commence the work of examining this argument, by stating—First, *The concessions which must be made to the Tractarians.*

In the first place, it must be conceded to them, that *the question is to be decided by the authority of Scripture alone.* We are not at liberty to reject any declaration of the Holy Spirit, because it is beyond our comprehension. The way of God must, in the nature of the case, be unsearchable to us. Hence proceeds the value

of His government. If He guided our affairs always in conformity with our conceptions, we might as well have been left to regulate them ourselves. He shows His love, in applying to our use that infinite wisdom, by which His own happiness and glory are secured. Because He is infinite, and we are before Him as nothing, we must often be perplexed with His arrangements. Hence the necessity for faith, and the discipline, as well as the reward of our docility ; for, by submitting to Him, we appropriate the perfections of the Godhead. Hence, when He declares the mystery of the incarnation, of the blessed Trinity, and of the resurrection from the dead, we are not supposed to comprehend or to be able to comprehend ; but, by believing, we use and enjoy the facts. The great additions to all human knowledge, which distinguish our holy religion, are all, in this way, to be received and used. So also, if it be found that Scripture teaches the doctrine in question, we are not at liberty to ask, How can water regenerate ? or, How can the Spirit regenerate, by water ? but we are bound to abide with simplicity by the holy Scripture, which is the highest authority to which we can appeal, until the Lord Himself shall come and decide all questions by His own judgment.

Secondly, it must be conceded to the Tractarians, that *those passages, in which the inspired writers themselves have declared the condition of all baptized persons in their time, are of the greatest consequence in this dispute.* By these, the meaning of the Holy Spirit may be ascertained more perfectly than it could have been in their absence, even from the clearest written law. The reason for this is obvious. Human language is ever changing, and in

every age, words and phrases are used in different senses : so that every law may, by consequence, be misinterpreted ; but actual cases expound the law ; and when these are incidentally introduced, interwoven with most important doctrines and interests, and given by the inspiration of God, the law becomes guarded, and fixed by actual divine administration. To such cases, therefore, we are bound to refer in all examinations of this kind, and even when obeying the positive law of the Redeemer, we are bound to use the utmost care to make our practice, in similar cases, conform with these examples. Happy is the man, who, in every department of life, is found walking side by side with Christ and His Apostles.

Thirdly, it must also be conceded to the Tractarians, that *the cases they have selected are precisely of this kind*, Rom. vi. 3—13 ; Gal. iii. 27 ; and Col. ii. 10—15 ; for instance, are passages precisely of this character. They all describe actual cases ; or, rather, they all describe the actual case of baptized persons, at that time, and in the estimation of inspired men. They are all introduced incidentally, in connexion with truths and interests, which concern the whole body of Christ. No person, in the Church, could be uninterested in the doctrine of justification by faith, or in the protection of that doctrine from abuse. Such, then, was the argument of Paul, in Romans vi. 3—13 ; where he proves that no person, baptized into Christ, could sin that grace might abound. So also with respect to Galatians iii. 27 : he is there proving the all-sufficiency of justification by faith, a doctrine in which the hope of every sinner is involved, and which the Galatians were in

danger of relinquishing, in favour of Jewish ceremonies. And, lastly, the powerful argument, in Colossians ii. 10—15, for purity of life, in the faith of Jesus, is binding on all in the body of Christ. With all these, therefore, Baptism is associated : and, as we study the sacrament in their connexion, we shall learn its nature from the highest authority : for, the works here quoted, were, the avowed productions of the Holy Spirit of God ; and the objects there sought, are essential to the constitution and welfare of the body of Christ. There is no age in which these great questions can become trivial : they belong to us as Christians, and as men.

Fourthly, in their *exposition* of these passages, several things must be conceded to the Tractarians.

1. It must be admitted, that *the passages relate to all baptized persons in the ancient Church*. This argument lies, with all its weight, against those, who assume that two kinds of baptized persons existed in the Apostles' days. To maintain this, they have recourse to a slight error in the authorized version of Galatians iii. 27. It is there said, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ ;" and these polemical divines use that phrase, as though there were some baptized persons who had *not* put on Christ. This is neither the meaning of our translation, nor that of the original Greek. The nominative *ὅσοι* (*as many as*), means *all such persons* as were baptized ; and, since Paul was reasoning with that Church, his argument is built upon this feature in their case. Their Church, however, was formed by the law of Christ, which was given to all the Churches. They were alike *then*, and hence, the language, which was used in addressing the Church in

Rome, is also employed in addressing those of the Galatians and Colossians ; and the idea, which the expression conveys, is absolutely essential to the constitution of Christian Churches univérally. There were other Baptisms in ancient times ; some, performed when worshippers were entering heathen temples, or when some particular acts had been perpetrated, as described in Aristophanes ; others, performed when men were entering into the temple of Jerusalem ; and others, connected with the Jewish sects. Each of these might have its own peculiarity and proper designation ; but, the peculiarity of the Christian Baptism was, that every one who had been baptized, entering into Christ, had put on Christ. This made the Baptism, Christian ; not heathenish, Jewish, or merely customary, but *Christian*, and, the thing affirmed of it, in one case, was true of it in every case. All persons baptized into Christ, *did put on Christ*.

2. It must be granted to the Tractarians, still farther, that, *the affirmations here made respecting baptized persons, involve the whole business of salvation*. It is in no modified or restricted sense, but in the most general, vital, and authorized sense, that the terms employed in these passages are applied to the persons baptized. Indeed, it is difficult to suppose that the Holy Spirit could sanction a loose, indefinite, and deceptive use of words, in any case, especially in one so responsible and solemn. What can be the value of inspiration at all, unless it give a certainty, and definiteness, to the vehicle of divine communication ? It was not in any such deceptive way, therefore, that Paul told the Romans they were under grace ; but, in a sense which involves the safety of the

soul, and a triumph over sin. In his Epistle to the Galatians, the defined and declared purpose of the Apostle was, to show the security of their position, and to induce them to retain it against all opposition whatever ; urging as a reason, that, being in Christ Jesus, they were sons of God, and heirs of salvation, according to the promise. Their position, *in Christ Jesus*, is also said, in Romans viii. 1, to be one against which, and in which, there is no condemnation. It is a state of justification before God ; through the righteousness of Him in whose power we are placed. Moreover, the condition, so described, is one to which a fruition of all the gospel promises is pledged. For, to be in Christ, is to be subjected to His guidance, and dependent on His aid ; so as to be confessedly, and entirely, and willingly in His power. Such persons, are said to be "*new creatures*," because these moral elements are the very opposite of that self-will, and self-dependence, out of which all sin is produced in the human heart. Where this change has taken place, therefore, there can be no destruction ; and where this is wanting, there can be no safety. The affirmations of Paul do not describe features merely incidental and unimportant ; but a vital, and most indispensable, condition of eternal life. His words and his reasonings alike, show that Paul regarded the state in which these baptized persons were recognized to be, as the only one in which a sinner could, with safety, wait for death and judgment and eternal life.

3. We must admit a farther argument of the Tractarians, which is, that *all these affirmations are personal, and not relative*. When the act of Baptism is to be used as a figure or type, for the instruction of others, there is

ample evidence given in the writings dictated by the Spirit, to make this appear ; but no such evidence is in these cases to be found. The Holy Spirit is speaking of facts, and their consequences. He speaks of consequences to be enjoyed by the very persons of whom the facts are affirmed. The Baptism of the ancient Church is here spoken of, not as a thing by which the union of *other* persons to Christ was proved, or its necessity shown ; but as an event, which exhibited the relation to Christ and eternal life, of those very persons who were baptized. Hence, the meaning would be just as clearly expressed by using the words :—" *All ye, who were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ* ; and being in " Christ, ye are sons of God, and heirs according to the " promise." It was their privilege to have a position, in reference to God and the great salvation, which was perfectly secure ; which could not be changed without sin and danger ; in which, all the obligations to holiness of life were in the highest degree binding ; and, in which, the fulness of divine aid was secured by the covenant of grace. The whole argument is personal ; all these blessed declarations are personal ; and, in the words of the Tractarians, these passages contain declarations of privileges, blessed and inconceivable, rather than duties to be performed hereafter.

4. It is necessary to make a still farther concession ; for, they say :—" It is no where implied that any " Christian had not been regenerated ;" and, " The very " error of the Novatians, that none who fell away after " Baptism could be renewed to repentance, will appear " nearer to the truth of the gospel, than the supposition " that, persons could be admitted as dead members into

“ Christ, and then afterwards be for the first time quickened.” The principal part of this statement is, *fully confirmed by the passages before us*. They represent the persons who had been baptized, in every case, as those in whom the great change necessary to salvation had already transpired. The acts, imputed to them, are all of such a kind, as necessarily suppose the operation of spiritual life. The expression,—“having been buried with him in our Baptism,” used in Colossians ii. 12, describes an act of the person who was baptized ; as well as, an act of the Church to which he submitted. The same may be said of Romans vi. 4. It describes the act of the baptized person, together with the end that he proposed in the act. “ *We through Baptism have been buried with him into his death, in order that, as Christ was raised up from the dead, through the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life.*” The passage quoted from Galatians iii. 27, is equally clear:—“ *For ye, as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” Here the expression, “have put on Christ,” used in reference to all who have been baptized, is *active* ; and describes what the persons themselves performed. But, to “put on Christ,” to be “buried with Christ,” and to do this, “that the body of sin might be destroyed,” are actions which are inconsistent with the absence of any spiritual life. Such acts, if performed without faith, would involve hypocrisy of the grossest kind. But the faith, which could do this sincerely, must, by the words of the gospel promise, be connected with salvation. Moreover, all these actions are described in the past tense. They are recorded as matters of history ; not as things which are to be done

hereafter, but as *things which have been done*, wherever the Baptism has transpired. Hence a baptized person is never, in the New Testament, exhorted to consider the necessity of his future Regeneration. He is urged, in many ways, to live in conformity with the principles to be carried out in the body of Christ : but, it is never said to a baptized person, "Except thou be born again thou shalt never see the kingdom of heaven."

The ways, in which different classes of Pædo-Baptists strive to evade the important truths thus urged by the Tractarians, are exceedingly diverse. Some have assumed a spiritual *birth-right*, in favour of all children born of persons who profess to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ; and then make their Baptism a *seal* of their supposed hereditary claim to the covenant of grace : but the Tractarians urge that, this is denying the doctrine of original sin ; and, in a treatise already published, intitled, "*Hereditary Claims to the Covenant of Grace considered and rejected*," I have shown that this theory is fatal to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, and to all the best interests of true religion. Others, make the Baptism to be unconnected with any advantage conferred upon the person who is baptized, and suppose the sacrament to be useful only in teaching and awakening the sympathy of others : but the Tractarians justly reply, that all the affirmations in these passages are of a *personal* nature, and relate to the very individuals who were baptized. Another class contend, that Baptism is only used to teach us what we are to seek in the Church, and at the hands of our merciful Redeemer. They dress up the idea in all the tinsel of imaginative beauty, and

appropriateness, as if it were for us to judge respecting that which is fit for Jehovah to ordain ; forgetting that "the Bible," "the Bible only," and not the dreams of an imagination heated in controversy, "is the religion of "Protestants ;" but, the Tractarians say, with truth, and most unanswerably, that these blessings are associated with Baptism in every case, as *past acts*, and recorded with verbs in the past tense ; and that, before such a theory can be received, the rules of grammar must be broken, and the controversial combatant must take the responsibility of altering the sense of God's most holy word. Lastly, (that I may pass over all unimportant variations of sentiment in the case,) others allow, that the sacrament is, by the Holy Spirit, made a means of communicating grace to the person baptized ; and yet deny that the person is thereby regenerate : to these, the Tractarians reply unanswerably, that the blessings which are here associated with Baptism, are all such as involve the change of heart which is necessary to salvation. Hence, the Scriptures speak of baptized persons as those who, in Christ, are sons of God and heirs according to the promise. These advocates of Infant Baptism, and its supposed benefits, are compelled, therefore, to allow, that the blessings associated with Baptism in holy Scripture, necessarily and always involve a spiritual Regeneration : or, otherwise, they must declare that, by the benefits of this ceremony, sinners may be saved, without being regenerated at all ; which would involve a contradiction of all the Saviour's instructions, as well as of those delivered by His holy Apostles ; for He said, "Except a man be born "again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I have detained you so long on these concessions, which are now avowedly made *by us* to the modern advocates of Baptismal Regeneration, because I wish to do them justice. It is grievous, at any time, to see a contrary course adopted, towards any one; but, especially, toward those whom we think to be in error. All hope of benefiting such, must be built upon the strict regard which we pay to justice and charity, in dealing with them. It is, also, the most direct way of coming to the truth. A kind and dignified concession, of all the points in which men agree, is the most direct way of deciding, those on which they differ. It is so in the present case. By thus carefully defining these unanswerable affirmations of the Tractarians, we have arrived at a most important alternative: for, if it be, by these passages which they have selected, so clearly proved *that Baptism, and a saving change of heart, are essentially united* in the sacred Scripture; then, the whole question that remains to be decided is, *whether this saving change of heart be given in the Baptism, or whether it be required in every candidate, before Baptism, as the indispensable condition of its administration?* To decide this, which is the great question in dispute, I must recall your attention, for a short time, to the passages already named.

Observe, therefore, most attentively, *first*, that *all these affirmations are made absolutely, with no regard whatever to any time or incident that might be supposed to have transpired after Baptism.* It is a positive declaration, unguarded and unmodified, that, without exception, all who had been baptized into Christ, had put on Christ, had been buried with Christ, had crucified the body of their sin, had become partakers with Him in

the likeness of His death, were under grace, did entertain the purpose of rising with Him in a newness of actual life on earth, were children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and (therefore) must have been believers. All this is affirmed absolutely, of every one, without any regard to subsequent time or incident. Some had been baptized into Christ several years before ; and of them the affirmation is true ; but, others might have been baptized into Christ only a week, or an hour ; yet the statement has no reference to the length or the shortness of the interval, but relates to every one, whether he were baptized but yesterday, or at the Pentecost. Wherever the Baptism had taken place, there the affirmation is made, in the same sense, and without any restriction. This is, in fact, the plea of the Tractarians themselves, and will not be, by them, I hope, denied : therefore, we infer with them positively, that every man came, from the Baptism, a person of whom all these things could, and ought to be, properly affirmed ; and therefore, also, he was thenceforward recognized in the Church, as a subject of that change of heart which is essential to salvation, and as a partner and brother in all the hopes, privileges, and obligations which, by the ordinance of Christ and the covenant of mercy, were confirmed to the whole body of Christ, that is to say, to every believer under heaven.

I entreat you, most calmly and solemnly, to remember that I am now doing nothing more than gathering out of these passages, the positive instruction which they supply in the case, and which has, indeed, been collected and pleaded for in the Oxford Tracts ; and, remembering this, to consider,—

Secondly, *That all the affirmations here made are such*

as necessarily imply the existence, developement, and use, of personal, intelligent, and voluntary action.

This is true with respect to every individual of whom these affirmations are made. It is not said of all baptized persons, that they had *been* clothed with Christ, with the livery or uniform of His service, or with His justifying righteousness ; but, using an *active* verb, in a past tense, the Holy Spirit saith, “ *Ye have put on Christ.*” This was their own act, therefore, and not the act of another. So, in like manner, it is said, “ *Ye have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts ;*” and therefore, the crucifixion of the body of their sin, and their becoming partakers with Christ, in the likeness of His death, were *their own* acts. They are also “ *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*” They must, therefore, have believed, and be still believing. But not one of these acts, of the persons baptized, could have been performed without some reflection, without choice, without some attention to the past, present, and future condition of man. The aim and resolution, expressed in the words, “ *in order that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life,*”—is quite decisive of this fact. It implies a conviction that the old life, though the ordinary life of man, was yet, both blameable in itself, and unsafe to him that pursued it ; and the intention indicates a confidence in Christ, by whom alone the new life can be, both guided, and sustained. It was thus with the Apostle Paul himself. He went down into the water of Baptism, a reputed Jewish persecutor ; but he came up out of the water, an avowed Christian. In conformity with that character which he thus embraced

and avowed, he forthwith went into the synagogue ; and, denouncing his former views and practices, he dared the trials of his new life, even in the face of imminent mortal danger. Hence, in Romans vi. 4, he says, “ *We became buried with Him, that we also might walk in newness of life.*” This was no thoughtless, involuntary act : it was one which involved all his interests, and, to use his own expression, placed him “in jeopardy every hour.” In the language of Justin Martyr, it was “setting himself apart for God.” In his own inspired language, it was, “putting on Christ ;” it was, “being buried with Christ ;” it was, “crucifying his sinful flesh ;” it was, “presenting his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which was his reasonable service.”

The passages do not describe by what means the men were brought to perform these acts. It is only affirmed that they were performed by every baptized person ; and, this fact itself, will do much to settle our inquiry : for, since these divinely authorized cases clearly show, that every one who received Christian Baptism did perform these several acts, and exercise the moral capabilities and inclinations, which these acts require ; we may conclude, that no person whatever, who is known to be incapable of these acts, can be a proper subject of the Sacrament ; and that, therefore, the Sacrament when administered to such, is wrongly administered. Moreover, since Papists, and Protestants, and those Non-conformists who unite with them in pleading for a spiritual gift in Baptism, do all unite in affirming that, the gift is conveyed *only* when the Sacrament is *rightly* administered ; then, consequently, the wrong administration of a Christian Sacrament, to persons known to

be incapable of performing the acts ascribed in Scripture to its recipients, can never, by their own showing, be a means of communicating any spiritual grace at all.

Such then, precisely, is the case of *infants*, for whose Regeneration in Baptism the appeal to these Scriptures has been made. From the very passages which the Tractarians have selected, and by the facts which they have most justly deduced therefrom, it is demonstrated, not that infants are regenerated in Baptism, but, *that the baptizing of them is not only unauthorized by, but positively inconsistent with, the word of God.* For, dear as are the interests of these most tender objects of our care, and sweet beyond description as the solitudes which make us seek their good must be ; yet, who will have the hardihood to affirm, that every infant taken from the font of Baptism has, when the ceremony so named has been performed, actually himself *believed, renounced* the world, as his own act, *become buried* with Christ, entertained in his own mind the *purpose* of rising to a newness of life, and *set himself apart for God* ? Such affirmations, if directly made, would, on the face of them present an absolute absurdity. The Church of England has decided this matter, with high authority : she, and her teachers, know that these things are not the case ; and hence, *sponsors* have been appointed for the child. By this unauthorized and unchristian act, of taking the proxy for the principal, they declare, that the persons, whom they baptize, are incapable of the Sacrament which they profess to administer. It is daring, and impious, to affirm of infants, what Paul affirms of ancient baptized Christians only. These passages prove that they are not, and cannot be, the persons spoken of ; and, therefore, that to them, at least, this Sacrament can

never be the ordained means of communicating any spiritual grace or benefit, because to them it never can be properly administered.

I by no means wish to degrade the subject, or to injure the feelings of any one ; but the illustration afforded by the ancient Catholic practice, of baptizing the bells used in churches, ought not to be passed by. For, if Baptism, as a divine sacrament, be an invariable means of communicating an effluvium called *grace*, supposed to be given therein by an Omnipotent Spirit, to the subjects of Baptism, whenever it is rightly administered ; then, if a bell be rightly baptized, this sacrament must also be a means of so communicating grace to *it* ; and the bell, which has been baptized, must also have been *regenerated*. But any advocate for regenerating bells in Baptism may speak, with an iron tongue, and with a mouth of brass, before he will be believed ; for the bell is incapable of any act ascribed, in these passages, to the recipients of Christian Baptism. The true answer in such case is, *the bell ought not to be baptized at all*. To do it is a desecration of the holy name of God. It is an assumption which He has never authorized. Such, then, is the reply furnished by these passages, to which the advocates for Infant Baptismal Regeneration have appealed. From their most direct and positive instructions, we learn, that *infants ought never to be baptized at all* ; and, that any construction of the Saviour's law, which admits them to this Sacrament, will place His divine commandment in direct hostility with those declarations of the Holy Spirit, to which the advocates of that practice have themselves appealed.

But, if it be asked what shall we do with all that mass

of writings which has been circulated, which is circulating, and which is yet increasing, in favour of Infant Baptism and its supposed benefits? I answer, lay them by among your curiosities, as medicines prescribed for the dead. A time will come when, without such evidence, men will not believe that such absurdities could ever be invented by human beings. But, if you wish to decide the question, and to be directed in the service of your Lord, you must regard the Holy Scripture, if not as your only guide, yet certainly as a guide to which you pay the most devout and humble deference. The Tractarians, "Aquila," "Presbyter," Papists, Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists, all appeal to this testimony. Let their systems be brought to it, therefore, that they may perish; for, be quite assured that this error, and its supposed transforming power, depend, not on the authority given for them in the Word of God, but on the ignorance of that blessed treasure which so lamentably prevails amongst mankind even to the present time. The Tractarians affirm that the question must be decided by Scripture: let the Scripture be understood, therefore, and all such hallucinations shall vanish like a sickly dream.

The supposed Baptismal benefit has also been associated with the Baptism of *adults*. It is necessary, therefore, to consider how far the evidence, supplied from these sources, will enable us to determine the question, in that case.

As far as the case of infants is concerned, the passages before us show, distinctly, that the moral acts associated with Baptism are such, as we know *them* to be, in the nature of things, absolutely unable to perform: but, the depraved condition of man remains after those natural

difficulties have been removed. The energies of thought may be developed by education, and genius the most brilliant may, by the force of mental discipline, command the admiration of our species ; yet, the heart may remain unaffected by sacred truth, and regardless of all the just claims of Deity to our worship. Every inducement, given to encourage our faith in the Redeemer, may be thus rejected. The preaching of the cross was, on that account, foolishness to the ancient Gentiles, and scandalous in the estimation of the Jews. The carnal mind was thus enmity to God ; and thus it still remains. Circumstances, which are ever changing, may modify the developement of this truth ; but, the principle is the same in every age. Men still love to dictate their own line of conduct ; and, to rely on their own resources. This is the natural inclination of fallen man ; it has grown ancient by its allowance since the fall, and it forms the old life of sin. To submit under divine authority,—to act, and live, and hope, and fear, rejoice and grieve, just as the teaching of Christ dictates,—is, whenever it comes to be produced in a human heart, quite a new thing. It involves the resignation of former hopes, and the cherishing of new ones ; the rejection of former rules, out of deference to the instructions of Christ ; the renunciation of all dependence on our own resources ; and, an absolute reliance on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not, merely, a declaration of the *imprudence* of our former course, that is here involved ; but, a confession of its *guilt*. It is bad in principle, as well as ruinous in its effect. It is on this point, that the great struggle for conversion has to be maintained with fallen men. They

will justify themselves before God ; and, treat their sin only as a calamity. Hereby repentance is prevented, the overtures of mercy are repelled, and everlasting ruin is entailed upon multitudes who sink into perdition under the sound of a gospel proclamation. A deep and inveterate alienation of heart is exhibited : and it is this, which prevents a recognition of the Redeemer's claim to our reverence and trust.

Such is the present inclination of mankind, as they come into the world ; and, to describe it, the strongest figures have been selected by the Holy Spirit. With respect to divine overtures, this enmity is said to make men deaf, so that they do not, will not, hear ; with respect to obvious facts, which unfold the power, righteousness, and love of God, it is said to make them blind ; with respect to his active service, this depravity of the human heart paralyzes man, and makes him dead in trespasses and sins ; with respect to the reconciliation and friendship to which God invites us, it is an absolute aversion, and is never developed so perfectly in its operation, towards the Redeemer, as when, by the lips of those who consummated His death, it cried, " Away with him, away with him : Crucify him, crucify him." Such is the moral state into which men have fallen ; and with which they are brought into this world. They are subjects of depravity, and children of wrath. But what is here affirmed of all who were baptized in the Apostles' day ? Not that they continued in this state, certainly ; but that they had solemnly abjured it. They had crucified this old man, that the body of sin might be destroyed. They no longer despised the grace of God, but bowed down under it. They no longer adhered


to the old and sinful life of ordinary human society, but were planted together with Christ in the likeness of His death ; that they might with him, and, by His guidance and help, rise up into a newness of life. They not only did not despise, and hate the Saviour ; but, for His sake, they recommenced their social existence on principles entirely new, adhering to Him, and His cause, under a pledge of devotion unto death ; and, separating themselves from the world, as from that which is, both dangerous in its tendencies, and execrable in its character.

Such, then, are the acts which the Holy Spirit recognized in those who were baptized ; or, more properly, in those who received Christian Baptism, in the Apostolical Church. They no longer suspected the Redeemer, but trusted in His truth and greatness. They no longer rejected, but became partakers with Him ; being planted together with Him, in the likeness of his death, to the intent that they might rise with him to that newness of life which He both promised and enforced. They were *in* Christ, subject to His guidance, dependent upon His aid, and voluntarily resigned to His power. Their persons and interests were placed, by their own act, altogether in His hands. This, then, is conversion ; for, “ if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature ; old things have passed away ; behold, all things are become new.”—If you speak of it in reference to past sins, it is repentance ; if in reference to past pursuits, it is conversion : for it is turning from them to God and His salvation. There is no change of heart necessary to salvation, which these affirmations do not include or imply. This is affirmed of all ; without any reservation respecting time or circumstance. These acts, and the

change of heart which they both imply and prove are, the moment after the Baptism had transpired, all said to have taken place ; and baptized persons are, in the Church, thus recognized by the Apostles when acting under the guidance of inspiration. Of these affirmations, therefore, there can be no doubt ; and, hence, there can be no doubt, that these were recognized as *converted persons*. The change of heart necessary to salvation is, therefore, recognized to have taken place in them all. This is a simple, and an indisputable fact. The advocates of modern Baptismal Regeneration, however, say, that there is *no conversion in Baptism*. This is pleaded, and pleaded with truth, by "Aquila," and by "Presbyter," and by the Tractarians. In this they are quite right. There is no such thing as conversion by Baptism spoken of in Scripture. These two facts decide our case ; for, if there be no conversion by Baptism, or *in Baptism*, and yet every person has been converted when baptized ; then, every baptized person must have been converted *before Baptism* ; and, the evidence on which these apostolical affirmations are made, must have been required and taken before the candidate was admitted to the sacrament of Baptism ; and, therefore, instead of supporting Baptismal Regeneration, these passages condemn the practice of *promiscuous Baptism* altogether.

One proof of this conclusion is supplied *in the nature of the case* ; for, if persons were baptized only with a view to their *future* conversion ; then, there must have been many baptized persons who had not yet evinced their personal act of faith, and conversion to God. But it is distinctly affirmed, that they were all sons of God

by faith in Christ Jesus ; and, therefore, they could not have been baptized with a view to their *becoming* believers, but on the evidence of their *having* believed.

A second proof is found, *in the description of Baptism which is supplied in these passages.* “Presbyter,” and the Tractarians, have pointed out the important peculiarity of the phrase βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς Χριστόν, *to be baptized into Christ.* It describes the act of the parties engaged in Christian Baptism, together with the ground on which it was administered. It has a direct reference to the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ, “in Christ,” which describes the state in which Christians look for the final judgment of God, without any fear of condemnation. The phrase “*in Christ,*” contains an ellipsis to be supplied by the verb *to be*, as in Romans viii. 1.—“There *is*, therefore, now no condemnation to them [*that are*] in Christ Jesus.” The phrase, “*into Christ,*” contains an ellipsis to be supplied by a verb of motion ; as in Galatians iii. 27. “As many of you as [*entering*] into Christ received Baptism, have put on Christ.” This distinguished the Baptism of Christ from all others. The heathen were baptized when entering into their mysteries and temples ; that was heathen baptism. The Jews were baptized when coming from the markets, or a journey, they entered into their families, and the temple ; that was Jewish Baptism. But the Christian Baptism, was an immersion, received by persons *entering into Christ.* A striking proof of this is found in the oldest version of Scripture extant ; I mean the old Syriac. It describes the act of Baptism by the word , *omad*, which means *to stand*, or *take a position*, as a pillar is raised into its place in a temple ; or, more ordinarily, as a soldier

receives his place, or takes his stand on guard. This act of receiving Baptism as persons entering into Christ was thence treated as one involving the greatest obligations, it being essential to the enjoyment of fellowship in the ancient Church. As it was a public act of great solemnity, full of hazard, and entailing most important consequences ; it must have involved either a sincere faith or a vile hypocrisy. Hence that severity, with which Simon Magus was rebuked by Peter. Simon had received Baptism, as one entering into Christ ; and yet the mercenary principle of his life was not relinquished. Peter, therefore, rebuked him with the grief and indignation which result from injured and insulted confidence. "I perceive," he says, "that thou art in the very gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Why say "I perceive," unless Simon had professed other principles, and a different intention ? It was thus, in every case in which this purpose of self-devotion was impeached. The early Churches visited it with their heaviest censure. If, in the case of martyrdom, the confessor failed to maintain his Christian character, if he did not die at his post, he was excommunicated as an apostate and a deceiver. In this view, it not only implied conversion, but it entailed the obligation of entire self-sacrifice. It remained for modern times, (I had almost said for this present age,) for persons professing evangelical sentiments, endowed with greater liberty and privilege than Christians had ever before enjoyed, it remained for them to teach, *that hypocrisy perpetrated in this Sacramental act is a step towards conversion.*

A third proof of this fact, is found in the expression,

"*put on Christ.*" It describes the act of assuming the Christian character, by comparing it with that of a soldier in putting on his uniform. This was to be worn, in the Church and in the world ; and was to be maintained with fidelity in both ; as an honour, as well as a mark of self-consecration. If this were done sincerely, it involved conversion of the heart to God : if done without conversion, it was the act of a traitor, or a spy, and was to be treated so, whenever it became known.

One illustration of this act may be found *in the military law*. The enlisting is a voluntary act, which depends on the choice of the individual. He may be persuaded, and submit to persuasion ; nevertheless, it is his own act : the oath, consequent upon it, is voluntarily taken ; but when taken, the violation of that oath is punished with the greatest severity. Such, then, was Christian Baptism, and the putting on of Christ. It was the voluntary act of a converted man, when publicly entering into Christ ; if he received that Sacrament without being converted to God, whenever it became known, he was expelled as a traitor and a spy.

Another illustration is found *in the law of marriage*. It is quite voluntary, in any one, to take a wife, or to become a wife ; but, when a person has been married, the law will hold him to the compact which it has recognized. Thus, the Church is said to be married to Christ ; and each member, is, either sincerely converted to His interests or is in the figurative language of Scripture, a spiritual adulterer.

The scriptural doctrine of Baptism thus becomes evolved, by the passages which have been named, and by the examples now educed. For therein the Holy Spirit

condemns the Baptism of infants, they being incapable of the acts herein attributed by Him to baptized persons. He also condemns the promiscuous Baptism of persons who have not evinced their conversion to God, because these acts, in them, would be hypocrisy ; but He exhibits the Baptism of believers as a public sacramental act, by which the candidate avowed his purpose, and the Church accepted his pledge of absolute and everlasting devotion to Christ. Like the military law, and the act of marriage, it was a means of bringing individuals into an avowed position, which enabled the Church to recognize their faith, or to punish their hypocrisy.

The force of this reasoning is still farther seen, from 1 Corinthians xv. 29. The Apostle there proves the fact of the resurrection, from the profession which had been made in Baptism. The Corinthians were baptized on a hope of the resurrection from the dead. This expectation decided them ; and it was essential to the maintenance of a profession, which was constantly exposed to martyrdom. Hence, he says, " If the dead rise not, *why are they baptized on a hope of the resurrection of the dead ?*" This sense of the passage is confirmed by Chrysostom, as I explained in a former exercise.

The passage is one of peculiar importance ; because it shows, in a striking manner, the moral use which was made of Baptism as an act of Church discipline. It could have been no such strange thing to St. Paul, for Corinthians, in that day, to have entertained doubts respecting a resurrection of the body from death. Such a feeling must have been entertained, by them, almost from their birth : it was a moral element of their heathen nature ;

and to it the Apostle made no allusion. The fact of which the Apostle reminds them is, that they who had been baptized, and had themselves received Christian Baptism on the hope of a resurrection of the body from death, were entertaining such a doubt. This was the strange thing; that they, after so receiving Christian Baptism, should yet deny the resurrection from the dead. It is quite clear, therefore, that Paul held them *as responsible parties* in that sacramental act. The receiving of Baptism was a part of their own history, like the act of marriage: it was done by each one, personally, for himself, and he was held accountable for it. Like the military oath, it was a matter in which the Apostle admitted no trifling or evasive prevarication. By that act the interests of others were involved, as well as his own. If a traitor be enrolled with the troops; confidence among comrades will be broken, and all the operations of the war, will become less effectual. If the man, who has become an husband, prove unfaithful, he is not only degraded himself; a woman is ruined, and subsequent generations will suffer wrong. The law provides, therefore, as much as possible, for the security of that engagement. It is not recognized in law, until solemnized in legal form. The matrimonial oath, or compact, like the military oath, must, therefore, have a legal administrator and a legal administration, which bring the compact within the recognition of authority and administrative justice. So Baptism, also, hath its legal form, and its legal administrator; and the effect of both is precisely the same: the compact of faith in Jesus Christ is brought out into public recognition and use, and they bind it with the highest sanction that the Church can give.

This whole doctrine derives a very powerful and solemn confirmation, *from* the passages which have been very properly designated by Tractarians, "*the illustrations of Baptism.*" Of these we may select as examples, 1 Corinthians x. 1—14 ; 1 Peter iii. 21 ; and Acts xix. 1—7. The first is derived from the example of the Jews ; who received an immersion, in the cloud and in the sea, when they entered into Moses. The second is derived from the case of Noah and his family ; who were saved from the deluge in the ark. The third is taken from the case of twelve disciples, who, after the Saviour's resurrection, had received only the Baptism of John.

By each illustration a peculiar object is obtained. The first exhibits the essential relation which this public act, of receiving Christian Baptism, bears, to the subsequent severity of Christian discipline. The second shows the relation of that act, to individual duty and ultimate salvation. The third unfolds its essential reference to the person, and work of Christ, as the anointed, and only Redeemer of mankind. We shall attend to these several cases particularly.

The first case occurs in a powerful exhortation to Christian obedience and purity of life. To urge this, Paul employs the example of the ancient Jewish people, at and after the passage of the Red Sea. Previously to that event, the whole matter of their deliverance was one purely of negotiation. If any individual, of their tribes, refused to follow Moses out of Egypt, no tribunal existed then at which he could be judged. When they came to the sea, it was their own act to enter the divided waters. They were then covered in by the cloud ; and

thus they became immersed, as they entered into Moses. If they had so resolved, before the passage, they might have turned back into Egypt ; but not so, after they had passed to the other side. From that moment, they were, under God, in the hands of Moses. By his means, they received their direction, defence, and subsistence. He was their anointed ruler : called, in one place, their *Christ*. Under his government, they were made to glorify the God of their fathers, either in the blessedness which resulted from obedience, or in the punishment which was due for their rebellion. They lusted, and were smitten : they committed idolatry, and were slain : they tempted their Christ, and were destroyed with serpents : they became adulterous, and twenty-three thousand perished in one day : they murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer : they were treated as men in the hands of God ; and that nation, continues to bear the same discipline, to this very hour. Nothing else can explain the present condition of the Jews. By the discipline of their covenant, they have become a wonder to all nations upon earth. These things, the Apostle says, are for examples to us ; for, having been once baptized, entering into Christ, we are subjected to His discipline, whatever the event may be. Whether we go forward to life, or turn back again into death, the vow of God is upon us ; and, in love or wrath, His honour must and will be vindicated. This is the whole point of the Apostle's exhortation ; and it is full of the deepest solemnity. It ought never to be read without prayerful self-examination. Hence, it has sometimes seemed ready to break my heart, when controversial critics have been found pecking at this, with

similar passages, as sparrows at work upon a flower, tearing it to atoms, defacing its beauty, destroying its form, and reducing it to absolute contemptibility; in order that, being bereft of all its grandeur and worth, it might seem to yield a vain support for theories which deserve not the smallest esteem. By this we learn, how ill men are repaid for thus abrogating the solemn purposes of inspiration, and turning away from those streams of thought, which flow from the dwelling place of deity, and, swelling into sublimest grandeur, rush to their conclusion, like torrents; as if to show, that their merciful author designed to carry all the soul with Him in his kind intentions.

The case of Noah, in 1 Peter iii. 21, is not intended to illustrate the mode of Baptism; but the moral act of him who received it, and the end which it contemplates. Noah had not only faith in God, but also in the predicted judgment, and in the means of his preservation. One hundred years were spent by him in preparing the ark, during which time, his faith sustained the contempt of a reviling world. He then entered into his ark, with all that was most dear to him; having none other hope of preservation whatever. He did it publicly, before a despising world. He looked for the judgment, but he expected salvation; and that salvation he obtained. His answer of a good conscience, was found in his complete and personal submission and conformity to the Divine will, as declared to him in that case. Such also is the case of converted sinners who receive Baptism on entering into Christ. They enter into Christ without any reservation, public or private. They do it in the hope of salvation, even from death;

and those, who are not hypocrites in the act, are sure of the salvation which they seek : but the very act itself implies a change of heart, which separates them from the principles, the life, and confidence of this fallen world.

The twelve disciples, re-baptized by Paul at Ephesus, were obviously Sabians; or had received the Baptism of John at the hands of that sect, which was numerous for many years in Asia Minor, after the death or ministry of our Lord. This was quite unlawful. It was not entering into Christ; which was the pledged intention of those who received John's Baptism during his ministry. Hence Paul, having explained the error, baptized them, as men entering into Christ, according to the gospel rule. The sincerity of the act was attested by the gift of the Holy Spirit, which followed; for it is stated that they spake with tongues, and prophesied. The fact of their receiving such a testimony from God, as the descent of the Spirit, and the bestowment of miraculous gifts, can leave no doubt of their conversion and faith, they must have been sincere believers, giving themselves up to Christ.

The propriety of thus interpreting these passages is clearly seen, from two forms in which the law of Baptism has been recorded. The one describes that duty in connexion with its preliminary process. The other, describes the privilege of those, in whom this preliminary process had produced its proper effect. The first statement of that law was given to the *administrators* of Baptism; the second, defines the character and privileges of such as are the proper *recipients* of Baptism. The first is given in Matthew xxviii. 16; it commands the apostles to go out and disciple all the nations. As

this was effected, they were to baptize them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ; teaching them to do all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. Now Paul, in the passages which we have been considering, says, that such persons, when baptized, did, themselves, put on Christ ; and were sons of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. But John, in the second passage I refer to, declares this truth in quite another way. In the first chapter of his Gospel, and at the 11th and 12th verses, he distinguishes these persons from all unbelievers, saying of the Redeemer, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not ; but as many as did receive Him, He gave to them a power to become children of God, to those who believed, [*entering*] into His name ; who had been begotten, not of blood, nor of a will of flesh, nor of a will of a man, but of God." The word *ἐξουσίαν*, translated *power*, means that kind of power which is exercised by a just claimant in a court of law. He can demand the estate and hold it under legal protection. The persons possessing that power, or right, are pointed out by two expressions. They are persons who *received Him*, [*Christ*], and who did *believe* ; who believed so as to enter *into His name* ; to wear it as an honour, and to act in it as their sole authority. These were real disciples, and these had power to become children of God ; that is to say, to enter His family, and to share its privileges. They were first begotten of Him, and then born into His family, and thenceforth recognised as its members ; not by bloods of kindred, or of sacrifice ; nor, by any dictate of the flesh ; nor by any will or authority of man ; but by God's own word and appointment.

Having been begotten again, or created anew, they were then born out of water and the Spirit, into the family of God on earth : thenceforward they were received as children, and members in the body and household of Christ.

You will please to observe, that the last passage, by stating and affirming a positive, rejects and denies the opposite ; and, as those who receive Him, believing, have a power to become children of God ; so, those who reject Him in unbelief, have no power to become children of God. Any attempt, on their part, to claim this holy privilege, is a clear imposition on the Church ; and a direct violation of its law. They have no right to take upon themselves that holy character ; being still in nature's darkness, and under the curse of sin. They have a previous question to consider : as rebels, they are bound to turn ; as sinners, they are called upon to repent. No merely assumed character will confer upon them any safety, either in the present life, or in that which is to come. It is he *only* who believeth that can be saved ; and that belief which leads to no repentance, is no belief at all. Until a man becomes a believer, in this vital sense, he is to be numbered with the ranks of the adversary ; and, if an enemy be found disguised within the lines at a time of war, by the military law, he is shot, not nourished as a brother, and trusted as a friend.

The evidence of this truth is, however, still more complete ; for it derives great support from *the examples of Baptism*, which are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The remark of Tertullian, which I read to you in the last exercise, that the eunuch was not one who sought a

precipitate Baptism, is applicable to them all. You have only to consider the circumstances of the men, and the character of the age in which they lived; and the cases will speak for themselves. At the Pentecost, for instance, when the blood of the Redeemer was yet fresh upon the Golgotha, where he died, and when every movement of His disciples must have provoked His murderers, who held the highest authority; what could have led the three thousand to espouse the cause of this recently crucified Nazarene, unless it were a deep conviction that his murder was a crime, that His claims were just, that His salvation was the only refuge of mankind, and that His power with God was all sufficient? Admitting these truths, they must have been prepared to meet scorn and suffering of every kind, for His sake. This is repentance and conversion; and, in this state of heart, they entered His family by Baptism.

The case of Cornelius was just the same. His devotion to Christ was contrary to all his interests in Judea, and all his natural feelings, both as a Roman and as a fallen man: but his view of the Saviour's claims, and his regard for his authority and grace, repelled all objections; and, if his own obedience was not a sufficient proof of his conversion, the Spirit, which fell upon him with miraculous gifts, ought to remove all doubt.

The Samaritans had been, some years before, prepared by Christ himself to expect the mighty power of God in the person of Messiah; but they were afterwards misled, by Simon the Eastern teacher. Through the preaching of Philip, they were led to believe in Jesus; and all their errors and sins were solemnly renounced, when they were received into the family of Christ by Baptism.

The Ethiopian is a case of great power and beauty. To maintain his obedience to the law of Christ, would place him in direct hostility to the Queen he served: if his encountering this was not a proof of his sincerity, the early and splendid triumph of Christianity in his mother-land, amounts to a demonstration, that the faith with which he returned was neither fruitless nor vain.

The Philippian gaoler exhibits just what we might have expected in a conversion wrought under circumstances so impressive, and so unusual; and the instance of Saul, the persecutor, presents the operation of faith in an attitude absolutely sublime. Yet it has remained for the audacity, (excuse the word, I cannot find one more appropriate,) it has remained for the audacity of modern times, to impeach the faith of this ancient Church, and of these its converts, affirming that, at their baptism, they were all unconverted men. Were it not for the sake of others, we ought never to respect such affirmations, but to punish their authors with the silence and the feeling which they deserve. Such men, however, cannot fall alone in their rashness and iniquity. "One sinner destroys much good." I am pleased to say, that the inquiries prosecuted in this town have not yet been stained with such approaches to blasphemous impiety; and I hope that they never will be; yet, while you reverence the grandeur, and admire the virgin beauty with which the Christian Church burst into existence, do not forget that all her perfection resulted from the sensitive determination with which she shrunk from all fellowship with unbelievers, and the works of darkness.

By some it has been disputed whether the case of

Nicodemus, related in John iii. 1—12, refers to the sacrament of Baptism at all ; but, in my opinion, the objection to this view of the passage cannot be supported. Admitting, therefore, that it does refer to Baptism, one or two points of great moment are determined by it. It is clear, from its construction, that there are two cases to which the expression, *born again*, or *begin life anew*, is applied ; or otherwise, that there are two agencies spoken of, whose operations unite in that one event. I incline, decidedly, to the latter view. There are, therefore, we admit, two agencies employed in that new birth ; the water and the Spirit. By these, a converted man begins life anew. Not by water without the Spirit, nor by the Spirit without the water ; but by the water and the Spirit. The visible action of the water, or rather of the whole sacrament, of which it becomes the instrument, is seen in the Church ; where, as an authorized act of discipline, it declares the character, and seals both the privilege and obligation of every believer in the family of God. The action of the Spirit takes place in the mind and heart ; and, leading and sustaining the believer, reveals itself in the effects produced upon the devoted convert. Each is essential to the support of that new life, into which a believing sinner rises and enters from the moment of his Baptism. If he seek salvation by the Baptism, without conversion to God : he acts the hypocrite, and the ceremony is reduced to a mere heathenish form. If, knowingly, he seek salvation and Church fellowship in the neglect of Baptism ; he dispenses with the ordinance of Christ, and is reminded, that faith without works is dead. This is the argument of Tertullian, and of the ancients,

who agree with him. Hence, we can see from the very words of our Lord, and those of the Apostle John, the position which Christ has assigned to this sacrament in the arrangements which were made for our salvation, and His glory in the world. For it is said, "Of His own will hath He (God) *begotten* us *by the word of His grace*." Here, and in this way, the first operations of mercy begin. The word of His grace, blessed by the Holy Spirit, produces faith. Then a sinner receives, for the first time, the recognizing fruits of his Redeemer's atonement. By the operation of his faith, he seeks to become a recipient of the Baptism; in which, he is openly separated from the world, and figuratively born into the Church. He is then to be registered as a child, and trusted as a brother, and held responsible as one devoted to God; being set apart, by his own act and at his own request, for the service and glory of his blessed Redeemer; and sustained, in his duty and calling, by the Spirit which is promised to consecrated believers, in every extremity, and according to their necessities.

"Presbyter" has laid great stress on the supposition, that *the benefits of the death of Christ are for the first time brought home to individuals in Baptism*; but the Scriptures, to which he appeals, show, that these benefits of the death of Christ are not brought home to individuals in Baptism at all; excepting only, that the merit of His atonement is the only ground on which the privilege of Church fellowship has been by God conceded to any sinner. His notion respecting *the first time*, has obviously arisen from his mistaking the import of Scripture terms; and, from his confounding the one with the

other. To be *born*, and to be *begotten*, do not mean the same thing; and his argument would seem to suppose, that men were born first, and begotten afterwards, which is absurd. God has chosen these terms from the course of nature, out of mercy to our weakness; and, it is daring temerity to treat them with lightness, turning them to the worst of purposes, and pushing discussion where delicacy can scarcely follow it. By *Generation*, a creature is *made to be*; and, by birth, that creature is *brought forth* into the world, to be recognized as a being, to be nourished with tenderness, and to become a partaker in the privileges and responsibilities of *human society*. So also by *Regeneration*, a new creature is *made to be*; and, in *being born again*, that new creature is *brought forth* into the Church; to be received with affection, nourished with care, and to be a partaker in all the privileges and responsibilities of *Christian society*. By his *Regeneration*, a sinner passes from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; but, by his *new birth*, he passes into recognized existence, as one who, through the Spirit which hath quickened him, aspires to the service and fellowship of his Saviour, and, is destined to overcome the world, through the guidance, and help of the Saviour to whom he is committed.

Moreover, the expression, "*born again*," is applied to individuals, in a way which supposes the previous existence of that vital and renewed state of heart, which is essential to the society into which the person is said to be born again. All unconverted sinners are represented as dead in trespasses and sins; but a child, that is born dead, is never registered in any nation. In this respect, the event has precisely the same relation to the pro-

ceedings of a Church, which the military oath, and the marriage ceremony, have to their several tribunals and laws. If a man be, by nature, and by law, unqualified for the ranks, the military oath will not qualify him. If parties be legally unqualified for marriage, the ceremony will secure to them no protection under the laws which guard that compact ; and, if a child be born of woman, yet it is not registered as a subject, if it be born dead. So likewise in the Church, if an unconverted man should gain admission to the Baptism, his being born of water will not secure to him the right of Christian fellowship : this deception, perpetrated in the name of God, is no ground on which he can claim the confidence of brethren, devoted to each other, and to God, in the spirit of martyrdom. He is born dead ; and, when that fact is known, he is cast out as a dead thing. If not visited with obvious vengeance, as Ananias and Sapphira were, he is cast away with rebuke, as Simon Magus was. The law of the case is given by our Lord himself : and it applies to every act in which the culprit fails in the consecration to which he became bound. He is to be cut off, and to become as a heathen man and a publican. This law has no exception whatever. Even those who have the form of godliness, if without its power, are denounced with unqualified condemnation. The Church, therefore, is intended to be a society of men endowed with spiritual life : unconverted men have no place in its fellowship. Therefore, (when it has been dressed in all the meretricious ornament that imaginations, heated by controversy, can, by possibility, yield,) the practice—pleaded for by “ Presbyter,” and his brethren the Tractarians,

of introducing to the Church, by Baptism, those whom they acknowledge to be unconverted, and therefore destitute of the change of heart which is necessary to salvation and Christian confidence ;—when described in the figurative language of the passages to which they appeal, is, neither more nor less, than, systematically, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, registering *abortions* in the household and family of God ; or, to drop the figure, it is systematically corrupting the society of the Church, and reducing the character of her fellowship, to that of the guilty, and polluted world, from which, by the clearest and highest obligations, she is bound to be separate for God.

As to our using the figurative term, *new birth*, as one descriptive of the act by which those who gave themselves first to the Lord, and then to His Church, were admitted into its fellowship ; I have only to say, with the Rev. Mr. Molyneux, that it is altogether a question about words. It was suitable to the time, and country, in which our Lord and His Apostles lived and taught ; and if it be liable to misconstruction with us, there are other scriptural terms, which may, with equal propriety, be employed. But, whatever be the resolution formed by different parties on that subject, this, at least, must be considered with the utmost care. We are not at liberty to employ, when describing the inward operations of divine truth, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, terms which have been applied, by the sacred writers, only to the outward, official, and social acts of the Christian Church. This, if persevered in, will confuse all our ideas of the work of salvation. Nor are we at liberty to apply to infants, or to any persons

respecting whose conversion we entertain a doubt, words and phrases, by which the inspired authors, have presented to us the privileges and duties of persons who were recognized as true believers. I say that *this must not be done*. No argument thus obtained can be admitted as of any force, except to show the temerity and weakness of him who uses it. By such a process, we may make the Scriptures seem to teach us anything. No censure can be too severe for him, who, knowingly, perpetrates so base a deed. Cruelly he stands between a forgiving God and His offending people. Such a man corrupts, in its choicest documents, the covenant of salvation granted to a dying world. Daringly he tramples on the peace of man, even in the presence of God who taketh vengeance. To dash the lighthouse from the rocky shore, were but compassion when, compared with this. And yet this, even this, is *the one*, the *only* source, of *all* that deserves the *name* of argument in the works which advocate this fatal error. I will not say that they do it knowingly, but they do apply to the operations of the Spirit what Scripture applies to the act of profession : and they affirm, of infants and persons known to be unconverted, at their Baptism, what the Holy Spirit affirms, exclusively, of men who were received as true believers. Thus they increase their own importance, it is true : making that official, which is and must be personal ; but thus they close against mankind the way of life, and open, to deluded millions, a wide and flowery thoroughfare to death. The end, which they accomplish, is as ridiculous as it is execrable. Appealing, with something more than confidence, to Scripture ; when they have been brought

to its tribunal, when their own selection of passages has been admitted, after many of their own interpretations and inductions have been allowed, out of those very inductions and interpretations we find,—first, that the benefits which they ascribe to this Christian sacrament are altogether a delusion ; that the Infant Baptism, or the promiscuous Baptism, for which they plead, is an absolute violation of the law of God ; and, secondly, that the only thing supported by those passages, as by all the New Testament, is *the Baptism of accredited believers*, which though they cannot agree together in stating their own theories, they all unite in their practice, and in their teaching, to condemn.

I might have concluded here ; but the circumstances of your case require that a few words be added, in reference to the baptized families mentioned in the Acts, the Abrahamic covenant, and the Baptism of John ; on which, however, I shall detain you but a very short time.

Upon the first of these topics, you are requested to observe, that we are only dealing with positive scriptural authority. All that needs to be shown, therefore, is, that the facts recorded agree perfectly with the conclusion to which we have arrived. The households which were baptized are, that of Cornelius in Cesarea, that of the gaoler, and that of Lydia, in Philippi, and that of Stephanus in Corinth. That they were baptized, is readily admitted ; but, then, it is also written, that they believed, or that they rejoiced in the Lord, and, in some cases, both are affirmed. In order to make these events serve the controversial purpose, our modern critics *suppose* that there were children in these households, who could not believe. I do not wish to controvert the

fact of their *supposing* it. But these authors will allow us, as we are bound to believe, that Luke, writing under the inspiration of God, was more likely to be *accurate* in his *affirmations*, than these interested parties are, in their *suppositions*; especially since the *supposition*, if *true*, would make the record of Luke directly at variance with the affirmation of St. Paul; who hath solemnly declared, that all who were baptized, entering into Christ, did put on Christ, by the act of their own faith. You will please to observe, that in the highest and best view of their case, you have only the *supposition* of the *moderns* set against the *affirmation* of the *inspired ancients*. You have only to consider, therefore, in this instance, whether you will, or ought not to, take the *affirmation* of the inspired historian and Apostle, rather than the *mere supposition* of modern controversialists.

The second topic would scarcely have demanded our attention at all, but for the kindness of a clergyman in your own town, who directed attention to a work entitled "The Churchman's Manual of Baptism." It was written against what he calls "the *Anabaptists*." That author ought to have known more of the parties thus named. Those persons do not *baptize again*, as this word implies; but they merely plead for Christian Baptism, instead of that ceremony which has, to so great an extent, taken its place. In a Tract, published twelve years ago, on that subject, I have shown that sprinkling is not Baptism in any case; and that the immersion of infants is not Christian Baptism at all. We do not baptize again, therefore: we only practice the reality, instead of an empty substitute. In this work, however, there is something peculiar. The author pleads for the

Baptismal Regeneration which we have just seen condemned by holy Scripture ; and defends the claim of infants to this privilege, as he calls it, by appealing to the Abrahamic covenant. That stale argument, when admitted, only defends the Baptism of children born of believing parents, and leaves his church without any support whatever, in baptizing children who have not believing parents : and farther, as a defence of the ceremony when performed on the children of believers, it has no force until it is admitted that they have an hereditary claim to the covenant of grace ; while the principal support of his "Baptismal Regeneration," is rested on the supposition, that children, not regenerated in Baptism, are left entirely to the uncovenanted mercy of God, which is a contradiction in terms. Moreover, to escape the allegations made by Non-conforming Pædo-Baptists, who oppose Baptismal Regeneration, he distinguishes between regeneration and conversion ; making the latter to depend upon the use which is made of the grace which he supposes to be received in the former. This Author requires us to believe, therefore, that unconverted sinners, when blessed in conformity with his dogma, have a double claim to the salvation contained in the covenant of grace, which was sealed and realized to them personally, in the Baptism, whereby he says that they were regenerated. He also requires us to believe, that these claimants, on a double ground, have *no hope of salvation*, notwithstanding, unless they become spiritually quickened and *begotten again* after they had been *born again*, after they had been registered as children of God, and after their title to eternal salvation had been sealed to them, personally, in a Christian sacrament.

Hooker, the great champion of the Establishment, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," has proved, that all the good a creature can enjoy must be obtained and secured, by obedience to divine law. His positions also show, that while all evil results from a violation of divine law, when once we have resolved to break it, no human mind can determine how far the evil will extend, or prescribe a remedy for its fatal consequences. These facts are proved by all experience, but no where more than in this controversy. For, passing by the delusion thus spread over millions of perishing immortals, who owe to it the consummation of their eternal ruin ; and shrinking, as well we may, from that spectacle of deformity and error, which is thus exhibited in the Christian sanctuary, and even in the worship of God ; if we only observe the effect of this delusion on those who defend it, we may well conclude, that its malignant results defy all human calculation. Their shifts and sophisms are so unworthy of man, even in his worst estate ; the coldness of heart which it induces, is so intense, towards all things solemn and important in our holy faith ; the steadfastness with which evils are multiplied, to prepare an escape from the censure of Divine truth ; and the sentimental gravity with which things most absurd are uttered in the name of God ;—all combine, with circumstances numberless, and most conclusive, to demonstrate, that this sacramental absurdity waits, in its sublimity of wrong, for language more forcible than that of earth, in which its condemnation may be properly pronounced.

The Baptism of John differed, from that which we now use, only in the compact formed by its recipients.

It first received its name from that peculiarity, by which it was distinguished from all the Baptisms which had preceded it. They were ceremonial ; but this, requiring such a change of heart as led to the rejection of all sin, was called a Baptism of repentance. By this, it was to prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight ; for Jesus the Messiah was already in the world, though he had not yet entered on his mediatorial dominion. The message, therefore, of that dispensation was, "*Repent, for the reign of heaven is at hand.*" After the Lord had entered on His ministry, because his reign was not yet actually begun, the same exhortation was urged by Him, and His disciples, until the time when He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and until the proof of that power was given at the Pentecost. During the whole of that time, the same pledge must have been given by the candidate, whether baptized by Christ, or by John. Both preached the advancing reign of heaven ; and both required a pledge of submission to that reign, whenever it might appear. This Baptism was prospective. Both, therefore, baptized at the same time, with the same view, and on the same terms ; and this Baptism, when administered by either, was equally valid. It agreed with the then position of mankind, in reference to the Messiah ; and it facilitated alike the acknowledgment of His authority. But, after our Lord became invested with His dominion, and the message of His love was published to mankind, the prospective pledge was no longer appropriate. Faith in Him, as Lord of all, and actual submission to His authority, were then required. Those, who had been baptized, had

only to fulfil their compact, and were not baptized again ; but, when Christ was exalted, the expectation of a coming Messiah was unjust ; for He, who had come, was now to be received. Hence, those who had been baptized by the Sabians,* in Ephesus, on the prospective faith which John required, were re-baptized by Paul : and this is just what we might have expected from the case itself. The disciples appear to have believed what they were taught ; when they heard the declaration of Paul, their faith was evinced by their submission to the truth, as he explained it ; and then, like all other believers, they were baptized into Christ. Repentance and faith, therefore, were united in both the dispensations ; though the faith of one was prospective, and the faith of the other was retrospective ; but, as far as the moral requirement was concerned, the exaction, in both cases, was just the same.

But, in addition to this development of the principle, this case affords a farther advantage, in the most perfect of all examples. It will scarcely be supposed, that our Lord needed a personal regeneration. He was always, and altogether, pure, and perfect. Yet, it behoved Him to fulfil all righteousness. Now, the expression, "all righteousness," thus used by Him, must refer to his personal service in the kingdom of heaven ; and we know that His obedience was a prelude to the atonement. The value of His example is enhanced here by the knowledge of the future, which he possessed at the time. From Him, there was nothing hid, that he had to suffer. He saw the life of trouble that lay before

* See Note I.

Him, the temptation, the resistance of sinners against Himself, the sorrows of Gethsemane, and the death He was to die. These things devolved upon him in the reign of heaven, and he knew it. Yet was He merciful to our unrighteousness; and, entering into the work and purpose of His Father, He bare His part in the mighty and gracious undertaking. His pledge was not withheld. He gave it; and He redeemed it when He redeemed us from death. No instrument of regeneration could increase the depth of His devotion; but his act would be for the good of others, and the glory of His Father. These were motives all-sufficient in His view: and, by His submission, He exhibited our duty, both to God, and man. In this spirit of obedience, therefore, His word is, "*Follow me.*" It is the watchword of His calling. You need not fear His competency to lead you, nor his power to bless. But, be not deceived, my brethren: He who thus fulfilled all righteousness, will also make you fulfil all righteousness: and by no other course can you be blessed. He will lead you, (if you will be led,) to sincere devotedness, to deep humility, and to absolute self-devotion. If you be His followers, you must, in His society, visit scenes of active service, and pass through Gethsemane and Golgotha; but He will lead you to the retirements, and elevations of Olivet, where he enjoyed his devotions, and from which He arose to glory. He asks you to be faithful, and will try your fidelity; so will He give you the sweetest assurance of His divine approval, and crown you with everlasting glory. Let, therefore, His precepts be your only guide; and His fellowship, in glory, shall be your endless reward.

For your patient and stedfast attention to so long and fatiguing a discourse, receive my sincere thanks. Since these Exercises commenced, other Tracts have been issued ; and, in these, other important sentiments connected with the question having been advanced, it seems requisite to some, that two additional Exercises should be undertaken ; namely—

First, on the injury done to personal religion, by the advocacy of Baptismal Regeneration, and its attendant errors.

Secondly, on the advantages to be obtained, by stedfastly adhering to the scriptural rule of baptizing accredited believers only.

These particulars could not be compressed within the space of this evening. I shall leave you to determine, whether such additional discourses shall be heard, and when that task will best accord with your own convenience.

LECTURE IV.

ON THE INJURY DONE TO TRUE RELIGION BY THE ADVOCACY OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION AND ITS ATTENDANT ERRORS.

DEAR FRIENDS,—We have stated in the former Exercises, that the idea of a spiritual gift in Baptism, together with the whole doctrine of sacramental grace, was derived from heathen philosophy by heretics; that it formed the essential element of Popery; and that, on appealing to sacred Scripture for support, it finds an absolute and unqualified condemnation. We can now advance, therefore, with confidence, to consider the injury done to personal religion by the advocacy, both of it, and of all those subordinate errors by which its supposed blessings were said to be conveyed to mankind.

But before we can estimate our loss, by any change of circumstances, the extent and value of our former inheritance must be known: for, only by comparing it with what we still enjoy, can we hope to arrive at any just result in our calculation. This principle is as sound and important, when applied to religious and spiritual affairs, as when it is employed in the most ordinary domestic or civil investigations. But the very mention of this rule will give to our present subject a dreadfulness, from which, if we were not bound to proceed, a natural timidity would compel us to shrink. For, if we turn to the sacred page, and ask what is the

nature of that society, which is called "The Church," "the Body of Christ," and so forth, and then inquire what were its character and privileges even upon earth; we shall find that the simple and exquisitely beautiful statements of inspiration have little or no applicability to the so-called churches of Christ now. With nothing more than the limited supply of information given in the former exercises, you can see, from the very surface, that in Rome, in Germany, in Canterbury, in Geneva, in Scotland; or rather, in those Churches which have a peculiar relation to those names, as well as amongst many Non-conformists in England, the word *Christian*, has undergone a decisive change in its import. It no longer means a man who is following Christ in the spirit of martyrdom. The Church is no longer a society made up of such persons. The character and practices of the Church can no longer be reconciled to the rule of human action implied in that description of character. The whole system of practical christianity has clearly undergone a change, which is not for the better, but for the worse. It is no longer possible to say, in the words of St. Paul, "Ye, as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." "Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The advocates of evangelical religion, themselves, plead for a Church within the Church; and thus, they confess that the Christian community has fallen from its original purity and devotedness.

You will also bear in mind what was stated in the second Lecture, that this process of degradation in the Christian Church became, both more obvious, and more rapid, after the time of Cyprian; when the doctrine of

sacramental grace came to be holden and acted upon, by those who claimed the highest ecclesiastical authority, and led to the introduction of Infant Baptism and Promiscuous Baptism. This fact itself would be sufficient to awaken our inquiry, respecting the moral and spiritual effects of the error so received; for that which comes from God is intended to show his wisdom and goodness by its fruits. We may not be able, at once, to see the end God has in view: but this great experiment of sacramental grace has now been in operation, for more than one thousand years. On its assumption have been erected the most extensive spiritual dominations, that have ever oppressed mankind upon earth. But few nations exist, in which it has not evolved its diverse and ever-changing activities. We have seen it in combination with every kind of idolatry; and producing, in rank exuberance, every kind of cruelty and sin. No good reason can now be given for suspending inquiry. We shall, therefore, proceed to trace, with as much brevity as possible, the injuries it has inflicted on the momentous interests of personal religion.

Having cleared the ground, so fully, in former exercises, it is not needful to make any distinction here, between the several advocates of this delusion. They may quarrel with each other, as long as they please, over forms of speech, or for the greatest eminence and worldly advantage in dividing the gains which flow from their imposition; with such things I have nothing to do. God will, in his own good time, deal with them all on this account; and vengeance belongeth to Him. Fidelity in our trust requires, only, that the error be duly exposed and resisted with our might; not in anger, but

in love. Cherishing this, therefore, with all tenderness, I shall lead you to the operations, not of any one party, but of the error which is common to them all. They plead for benefits, supposed to be attendant upon the baptism of infants, and promiscuous baptism. It is quite immaterial whether the parties be Papists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, members of the Anglican church, or Non-conforming Pædo-baptists. We speak of none on any other ground ; and of no one party, any farther than they stand convicted in this case. The most likely to complain are the Non-conforming Pædo-baptists ; but I have already paid them all the courtesy that they can justly expect. With open-hearted and brotherly affection, I pointed out their position, in a letter respectfully addressed to their own body, through Dr. Joseph Fletcher, of Stepney. Without prejudicing the case with any judgment of my own, I asked them to explain it themselves. Instead of appreciating my kindness, they returned it with abuse ; impugning my moral character by an imputation of falsehood, and yet withholding the evidence on which they rested the charge. I forgive them this wrong, with all my heart, but dare not forsake my duty. The works referred to by the editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*, I have examined ; and I find in them the advocacy of a spiritual gift in baptism, which was recited in a former lecture. To evidence so obtained, and having the authority of their own suggestion, they will not, I hope, object. Cyprian, also, is their favourite oracle for Infant Baptism ; and they must not object to being placed with one, so much extolled, and to whom they appeal with so much exultation, as parties in the case before us. If they will have

the ceremony, and use the sentimental influence which it exerts upon the public mind ; they must of necessity share in the responsibility which attaches to its evil consequences.* These, therefore, may be traced to this sacramental error under five heads.

First, as it influences the constitution and fellowship of the Christian churches.

Secondly, as it leads to the corruption of Holy Scripture.

Thirdly, as it augments the difficulty of inquirers in attaining the truth.

Fourthly, as it enfeebles the activity of Christians in the work of God.

Fifthly, as it produces the strongest argument for open infidelity.

Each of these topics is so important, and opens on so wide a field of observation, that it might with propriety form the subject of a separate lecture ; but necessity compels me to compress the whole within this limited space. Let us, therefore, without farther delay, proceed to consider, First, *the influence which this sacramental error exerts on the constitution and fellowship of Christian churches.*

Everything to be found in Scripture indicates the intention of our Lord, that those who bear his name should be separated from the world, in the principles which regulate their actions, in the character they bear in society, and in the confidence they repose in each other. Hence his affirmation, "My kingdom is not of this world," and hence, too, the elevated terms in which his followers are described : "*Ye are the light of the world.*" "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" For the same

* Note K.

reason, also, he ordained the peculiar law of this society. "*This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, so love ye one another. Then shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*" The word here used is not that which describes an ordinary friendship, but the most noble and pure exercise of respect and confidential attachment. But this approving affection was utterly impracticable and unsafe, and, by the law of God, even guilty, in reference to the unchanged masses of society. From these they were commanded to be separate; and the baptism, which he appointed, prepared the way for the affection here enjoined, by rendering the convert known, and binding each professor to the common obligations of the whole. Such was their conformity to this law in the first church, that Luke affirms of its then about ten thousand members, that they were "*of one heart, and of one soul.*" For each other, and their Lord, they endured the loss of all things; and raised to the dignity of a proverb, the expression, "See how these Christians love one another." Their society was sacred to the culture and reciprocation of faith, and hope, and love.

Such a community must have had an object, in promoting which the energies of its members might be combined; and this is defined, in the commission given by Christ to his apostles, to be two-fold, the evangelizing of the world, and the edification of the church itself. For this purpose they seem to have been preserved upon earth, and still subjected to its manifold sufferings. But no object attainable on earth was its end. This society of the Church, in this respect, resembled a caravan or company of pilgrims passing through a desert. They

were seeking a better country. The "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," was constantly in their view ; and gave both direction and uniformity to all their movements. In its privilege, this society was exalted above all others, by the peculiar presence and most intimate fellowship of God. Its members were his children, his prophets, his priests, his kings, the very members of his body in Christ. Their privilege was a joint inheritance with Christ in all the fulness of God : and the law of their association was that of devotedness to their common Lord, and to each other in him.

Two circumstances connected with the ancient Church will set this matter in a still stronger light. One was, the solemn and awful denunciation of all other religious systems by its author, and the open hostility with which, on that account, they opposed its progress. Between the Church of Christ, and any other system of worship and fellowship, there was no link of union whatever. It relinquished the Jewish, as a mere shadow of good things to come ; and it denounced the heathen systems, of every kind, as altogether execrable. The character, that it formed and required, was altogether and absolutely new. The Christian was, therefore, designated the "*new man*." His interests, his tastes, his rules of action, his present enjoyments, and future prospects, were all new, and so new, that the propagation of the system was called turning the world upside down. A glance might serve to explain the reason of this. The whole practical system of Christianity was based upon the great additional truths, which Christ revealed from heaven. It related to eternity, not to time ; to the soul, and not to

the flesh ; and, exulting in afflictions and martyrdom, it sought the consummation of its happiness in the resurrection of the dead. By it too, the great idea of free and sovereign grace was unfolded to this guilty world ; and all the felicities of this community were drawn from that single source. All these things were new to the race of man ; and, not less than the character and treatment of its founder, exposed the Christian community to contempt. As opposed to the present interests and inclinations of mankind, it was hated ; as propounding a better inheritance, it was despised. Christianity thus became regarded as a nuisance, and an injury to the social system ; and the wrong, which it was supposed to inflict upon society, was vindicated by punishing its advocates with death.

All this was contemplated by its Author. He had from the beginning said, " The mother shall betray her daughter, and the daughter her mother, to death." All the enmity of the human heart was open to his view, and he intended to encounter it with the operations of his love. He intended to do this through the agency of His people, in the use of His word, and in the enjoyment of His Spirit. Led by these, this society of the Church was ordained to encounter all the powers of earth and hell ; and to conduct a process, which should form the last interposition of mercy antecedent to the final judgment. Nothing could be more important, therefore, than the simplicity of their aim, the purity of their character, and the constancy of their hearts, to whom this work of love was thus to be committed. On these were suspended, under God, the interests of a ruined world, as well as the glory of its Redeemer. Hence, the

solemnity with which, in the whole course of his own ministry, the Lord was pleased to urge, on every convert, the necessity of entire self-devotion. No man can be my disciple, unless he is prepared to forsake all things in following me. "He that loveth his own life more than me, is not worthy of me." Hence, too, the initiatory ordinance, which he appointed, led to the same result. It stood like a protection at the entrance of the Church. It exacted from every professor the credible declaration of his faith in the common Lord ; and solemnized the personal and voluntary engagement of his being set apart for God. By this act of self-sacrifice, the converted sinner became a devoted thing. He henceforth lived for God alone. It is this, which accounts for the solemn vindication of that compact, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They were the first to break through the sacred enclosure, and taint the virgin Church with their deception ; and they were not rebuked merely, but struck dead, because they lied to God, and not to man.

No arrangement will give infallibility to human actions : but this provides, as far as possible, (without miraculous agency,) for the purity of the Church, and the holy confidence to be preserved within the sacred enclosure. It was a point of official examination, and it formed a basis for future proceeding in discipline. By this means the Church could watch her own admissions, and purify herself, whenever she found that she had been deceived. But every such precaution is utterly destroyed, by the error now under consideration. By making Regeneration to be the *effect of Baptism* instead of its *pre-requisite*, the door was

opened to every impostor : and pollution flowed in as by a flood-gate. This was killing the sentinel, that the strongholds of Zion might be thrown open to the enemy. When once the pre-requisite of conversion had been laid aside, the baptism became a figment of no value or meaning ; and administering it in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, an unauthorized desecration of the name of God. It meant nothing, it conveyed nothing, and could bind no one ; and, therefore, could be no protection ; it was merely a shadow supplanting the substance. When it became extended to infants in general, every idea of a personal character, and a moral engagement, in the act, was entirely done away ; and the ordinance, so administered, made the Church coincident with the world. Baptism, in that case, becomes a mere blind, through which the danger of unconverted sinners becomes concealed, and the reason and necessity for conversion is hid from their eyes. Men enter the Church, then, without any change of heart, and they influence the society of the Church, by the unsanctified developments of their fallen nature.

The methods employed, in defending this error, make it both more pernicious and more contemptible. Those who wish to make it promiscuous and universal, change the compact of Baptism into a mere emblem, and thus declare the Church to be protected by a shadow ; but those who wish to confine the ordinance to infants of believers, assume an hereditary claim to the covenant of grace, and labour to convince us that faith and repentance are propagated by natural generation. But, in every case, the result is exactly the same. Whether they become members of the Church by birth or by

Baptism, the unconverted are systematically received. The constituency of the Church is thus, by system, made to be impure. Hence, the impossibility of maintaining her discipline. Crimes, formerly censured by excommunication, are now no longer even disapproved in the Church of Christ. The want of that sphere for perfect confidence, in which the spiritual man could think out loud with safety, on all his perplexities and hopes in the divine life, is felt and deplored by all. In the Church of Rome, and the Reformed National Establishments, the effect of this has been seen, not only in the destruction of Christian fellowship, but in the debasing of the Christian ministry. When the Church is composed of unregenerate men, the unregenerate will fill her offices. Urged by the selfishness of human nature, they will say, "*Put me into a priest's office, that I may eat a piece of bread.*" Thus the outrage of all law, human and divine, exhibited in the history of church patronage, has been produced. A church, whose constituency has been corrupted, holds no treasure in safety, and keeps no office pure. The Church of Rome hath sought to remedy this evil, by inventing her confessional, and forming her vast system of artificial discipline. By this means, she has produced a heartless formality instead of godliness, and gathered a riper fruit of her delusion in monasteries, crammed with adulterers and the unclean. The Churches of Germany and England have relinquished this vain remedy; and thence, relying on enactments of human governance, they have sunk into mere instruments of political power. In England, the army and police are no more subservient to the earthly power, than is the state church,

and she is no more respected by those who employ her influence. To seek for spiritual fellowship within her pale, is utterly ridiculous. If she behold such fruit ripening in others, she will call it methodism and cant; she will hire her poets to write a Hudibras, and burn it up with satire. This is just what we might expect, from a body of baptized unbelievers, fed with the fat of the land, and dividing the spoil of an oppressed people: it is what we have to expect from such a body in every case. The changing of its name, will never alter the thing. Unbelievers, though baptized, are unbelievers notwithstanding: and they can have no fellowship in Christ, in whom they have not believed. In their society, therefore, no such fellowship in Christ can ever be enjoyed. If men will allow such perversion of language, they may be called *a church*, or even *the church*; but, neither agreeing with the law of its institution, nor yielding the benefits for which it was instituted, it has no other claim to be regarded as a Christian Church, than that which is found in a bold and unrighteous assumption of the name.

Of all the things with which we have to do, nothing is so delicate as a confiding affection. It seeks its object out with ardent perseverance and self-denial, that it may find its whole delight, and repose in the enjoyment of its fellowship. Hence, in all the moral history of man, there is no one section so filled with melancholy interest, as that in which we trace the progress of confiding youth; which, nursed in maternal embraces, casts itself with unsuspecting freedom on society, and through the wanton injuries it there receives, hardens into the caution and reserve which too frequently distinguish the close of

active public life. Injury follows injury, in such rapid succession, that we can scarcely trace the intermediate changes which transpire ; and the transformation becomes almost unaccountable. The more delicate the affection which is thus insulted, the deeper the wound, and the more fatal is the result. Hence the clue may be obtained, to that deepest of all injuries which is inflicted on the religious feeling of the heart. God has designed it to be the most noble, generous, and constant, of any that are generated in the breast of man. When in the freshness of the new birth, after the word of God has been blessed in its action on the conscience, and when the first affection of the new creature has been evolved, it seeks a sphere for its indulgence and activity in the Christian Church, it seems like a thing created for paradise. The church is designed to be its nursery, and here the Lord intended it to be safe from injury and insult. With all the glow of hope, the convert enters this circle formed for his new existence ; and finds, instead of individuals imbued with the same holy emotion, a sanctimonious mendicity, and professions hollow as the compliments of civil society ; his most generous feelings are then used by others to the worst of purposes, and he learns, with bitterness, that caution is as needful in the church as in the world. To what must we attribute this, which comes not in any solitary case, but which forms the dreadful result of all experience, until in the so called churches of Christ, as well as in mercantile transactions, it makes the expression, *simple man*, convey the idea of mental weakness ? Is that simplicity in itself a fault, or open-heartedness foreign to the grace and purposes of God ? By no means ; the evil is to be

found in the corruptions of mankind ; which are, by promiscuous fellowship and baptism, brought into the church. The regeneration, supposed to transpire in baptism, leaves men unchanged in heart ; and the hereditary faith, or right by birth to the covenant of grace, is altogether a hoax. By these, and like errors, the unrenewed in heart obtain admission to the church ; and there they display the fruits of their depravity. One such man in a church is an affliction ; and there, if anywhere, "*one sinner will destroy much good.*" But, when a worldly ambition has corrupted the sacraments, and thrown open the church to depraved men, what evil may we not anticipate ? When the rule is, to make the Church comprise the whole population, and promiscuous membership is urged by the ministers of Christ ; or, when high professions of evangelical religion are combined with looseness of discipline ; or, when the unrenewed are baptized and received into the Church in any case, its society is made corrupt through its own ordinances ; and the sanctuary, provided by divine love to receive the convert, is stained with pollution, and given up to the adversary.

This is the first evil charged upon the systems we have repudiated. I advance secondly to state that the advocacy of these baptismal errors injures the cause of true religion, *by occasioning the corruption of Holy Scripture.*

Men who think it right to assume any station in society will, when possessed of its advantages, always feel at liberty to defend themselves in holding it. If the position be doubtful, and its defence desperate, a less regard will be paid to the instrumentality employed in the conflict. When a citadel is stormed, the garrison in

distress will tear up its own ramparts for missiles of destruction. Thus it has ever been in the conflicts of the Church. In the enjoyment of all her sacred privileges, the word of God is her authority and defence. Behind this, in every right position, she may rest secure and smile at all adversity. But, when her position is wrong, instead of authorizing, the word condemns ; and if it affords any momentary help, it must be torn up and flung at random, in pieces, and with violence suited to the emergency. All the rashness and recklessness, thus exhibited in the conflict for sacramental power, it would be impossible to state here ; but one or two points of great solemnity are worthy of particular regard.

In the early ages of Christianity, those who wished to sustain unauthorized statements by appeals to the word of God, since they for the most part used the language in which scripture was written, did it by putting their own construction on its declaration ; and their glosses, or explanations, being sometimes written on the margins, became copied into the text of scripture. This produced a discordance in its readings ; which, being increased by accident, afforded the wider field for discussion. To this, in a great measure, must be attributed the influence which was acquired by advocates of error in those churches which used the Greek language. But those who used the Latin, and western languages, could obtain but little influence in that way. When their practices had deviated from that of the Apostles, therefore, we find them employing quite a different artifice. Since the translation of certain words would condemn such practices, they resolved to transfer and not translate them. Hence, the words relating to the sacra-

ments, and officers of the Church, and those which express the peculiar ideas of the gospel, and the privileges which belong only to Christians, are found in very early translations, not translated but transferred, and transferred in a different sense. It is sufficient for our purpose to name here the words *Presbyter* and *Deacon*, two Greek words which are transferred so as to suggest two distinct orders of clergy, differing from the offices which bore those names in the apostles' time. *Eucharist* is another, which was so transferred as to represent the stage play of the mass, a ceremony which never entered the wildest imagination in the apostles' time. And *baptizare* is a fourth case, in which the Greek word is transferred to represent, as I showed in my last Lecture, an act which is absolutely condemned by all apostolical authority in the New Testament. When these foreign terms came into the several western languages, there was an air of mystery about them; the people knew not what they meant, and the priest explained them to suit his own convenience.

But this was not sufficient for the object to be gained. When these words had been transferred, and used in a sense differing from that of the original, it was necessary to give an interpretation to other words and sentences of scripture, that might correspond with the sentiment thus advanced. Hence, in the ancient authors who pleaded for this sacramental grace, figurative passages are used as though they were literal; and statements, which, in the apostolical writings, are only made in reference to believers, or converted persons receiving baptism, were used in reference to infants, and persons baptized without faith. *Grace*, which means in scrip-

ture the unmerited love of Gôd to sinners, came to be used as though it meant an ethereal fluid communicated by official acts of men, as heat is made to penetrate a stone. Practical religion was thus reduced, from a moral to a physical process ; the necessity of learning and doing the will of God, as revealed by Christ, was set aside ; subjection to the Church and her officer, the priest, was substituted in its place ; and scripture was bent and turned, like a sheet of wax, to fit and conceal the human invention.

Such a system could scarcely be secure, when scripture was freely given to the people. Hence, the translation of the sacred page into modern languages became discouraged. The worship of the Church, and the reading of scripture, were, in the west of Europe, confined to the Latin tongue, and the promiscuous study of scripture was forbidden to the people ; so that many were burnt to death, for possessing a copy of the word of God, and for teaching their children to read it. So great was the dread of divine truth which possessed the Church of Rome, that Tyndal's first edition of the New Testament translated into English, was bought up by the Papists at immense cost, and most of the copies burnt at Saint Paul's ; while the author himself was pursued with a hatred which never could be appeased, until he was strangled and burnt for translating it.

The Reformed Church of England professed an entire subjection to Holy Scripture, but the founders of that Church desired to retain the sacramental power found to be so necessary in the domination of Rome ; and hence, when the present authorized version was prepared, the translators were instructed by James, not to

translate the official and technical terms by which that power was concealed or supported, but to retain the words, as used in versions prepared in former times and used by Roman Catholics. His words are very positive. "The old ecclesiastical words are to be kept." In all probability it is to the operation of this cause we must ascribe the fact, that this authorized version is, in many places, less accurately conformable to the Greek than the version of Wickliffe, translated several ages before.

Besides these errors, so fearfully adapted to prepossess the public mind, and favour the advance of this delusion, others have been adopted to facilitate a misconstruction of these writings as they are now possessed. In pleading for infant baptism, and the baptismal gift, Papists and non-conforming Pædo-baptists, boldly appeal to *tradition*; and, by the dark and frivolous uncertainties which they find there, some Jewish, and others supposed to be Christian, they endeavour to change the whole sense and spirit of the Sacred Writings. The common mode of deducing the baptism of Christ, from the various baptisms and ceremonial customs of the Jews, is of this kind: and thus they make void the law of Christ by their traditions.

I am unwilling to speak too severely on the criticism used in this controversy, although it is frequently of such a kind, as would shame a school-boy in his ordinary lessons. Some of these misconstructions of the inspired word must be attributed to ignorance, which we are bound to pity, and others to rashness, for which individuals only can be blamed; but the greatest evil lies here;—men in the ministry, who ought to know better, are daily circulating among the people anonymous

mis-constructions of God's Holy Word, and others written by men of no repute, or who have long since died, which serve their controversial purposes, but to which they dare not affix their names. The case is even worse than this. When the people are led to the original, in a way that exhibits its true meaning, these men will turn from criticism to satire, and say, "I want a religion that will stand by the Bible as it is;" as though they would take our version, as the only, or the highest authority. If they do mean this, why, when baffled by our version, do they defend themselves by misconstruing Greek? But if they appeal to Greek, why should they grow indignant and sarcastical, when the Greek is clearly explained?

One instance is of so melancholy a nature, that, though I dare not pass it by, I have yet scarcely courage to describe it. Of late, the study of the Greek Testament has been facilitated by the use of Greek and English, instead of Greek and Latin, lexicons. Hence, by the help of Greville Ewing, an *anti-baptismal lexicon* has been made, in which the controversial assumptions of Pædo-baptists have taken an authoritative form, by being transferred to its columns. No violation of public confidence can be more flagitious than this. His affirmations on the words relating to this controversy are contrary to all critical authority and use, whether ancient or modern; and evince a moral daring, which scarcely another individual on that side of the question has ventured to practise. His book and his reputation would, by this one circumstance, be ruined for ever; were it not for the extensive and strong desire which exists in his party, to use every practicable means of conforming the words of the Spirit to their own notions. On any

subject, such expedients deserve to be condemned. A club, formed in any common ale-house, would not suffer so vile a misconstruction of its documents and regulations. How then shall we approve it, in reference to the everlasting covenant of mercy? God, in compassion to us, knowing its worth, and our infidelity, caused His holy gospel to be first proclaimed, and then set up in a language which has long passed out of common use, as if for the purpose of leaving this holy document unchangeable; and yet, so base is this idea of Infant Baptism, and Promiscuous Baptism, with their supposed spiritual gift, that we find its advocates hacking at the plates of this inspired and adamant stereotype, and defacing or corrupting whole columns and pages, before they can give a shade of plausibility to the delusions which they determine to propagate.

In the third place, the evils which attend the advocacy of these errors are still farther felt, *in the increase of difficulties to be surmounted by inquirers after truth.*

Truth, as it is exhibited by Christ and his apostles, is the only sure guide to every sinner in seeking the great salvation. Acting in his own character, as the Father of mercies, God hath been pleased to render all needful instruction, on this momentous subject, easy to the meanest capacity. The path of life was intended by him to be so plain, that a way-faring man, though a fool, should not err therein. But this controversy crowds with difficulties the very entrance to this "highway of holiness." Like the Pharisees of old, many, engaged in this discussion, seem not only not willing to enter themselves, but take immense pains to close the door of life against those who are seeking to enter.

We may hope that this is often the result of mistake, but the fact is unanswerable. Men are embarrassed. When roused to a sense of their duty and danger, they find a clamour of discordant advices. One proffers a regeneration in and by baptism ; another teaches an hereditary claim to the covenant of grace ; a third enforces simple faith in Christ, and obedience to his commandment. All these claimants, to his attention and confidence, are at variance ; and yet all appeal to the same book for their authority, and all appeal to its original import. If the inquirer be urged to read for himself, his answer is, I am not learned ; if he exercise an implicit faith in his teachers, he becomes confounded by their differences. He finds Scripture ranged against Scripture, and Church against Church, and authority against authority, in the very first lesson to be learnt, and on the first duty to be performed. The afflictions which result from this entanglement are immense ; and will be always increased, in proportion to the sensibility of conscience, with which the inquirer is concerned to be perfectly right.

Nothing can be more painful than the results of pastoral experience, in the case before us. On the one hand, many are betrayed into a submission under authority, which never gives them peace ; others are soothed into a reliance on the fiction of a spiritual gift in baptism ; and others are kept in lengthened torture, inquiring and discussing half their days. Can it be possible that the God of all truth intended this ? The very idea were an impeachment of His wisdom and kindness ; for such obscurity, in a duty binding upon all,

if fairly attributable to the Legislator, would form an apology for universal disobedience.

What I particularly complain of is, that the method of treating Holy Scripture in this controversy, gives the inquirer no chance of settling the question for himself. In the translation of Scripture which is commonly used, there is no uniformity of method adopted. Words are in some cases borrowed, and in others translated, and in different cases translated in different senses, so as to conceal the meaning of the Spirit. *Βαπτω* is a case in point. It occurs with its derivatives about one hundred and twelve times in the New Testament. It is written or translated, in our version, so as to appear three. In Mark vii. 4, it is rendered *wash*. In John xiii. 26, *to dip*, and in Matthew iii., with many others, it is written *baptize*. No English reader would know that the word is radically the same in all the cases, and has always the same meaning.

But this is not the only word so used. To make this plausible, six other verbs, with their derivatives, must also be obscured; and some of these are used in expressing the nature and application of the atonement.*

All these, and multitudes of cases besides, occur in the question respecting the *mode* of baptism. In pleading for its *subjects*, still greater difficulties are provided for the convert. Some rest the claim of infants, to that ordinance, on a forced analogy between it and the Abra-

* This fact is more fully stated in my "Letter to a Friend on Christian Baptism." Third edition, which may be obtained at Ward's, Paternoster Row, through any Bookseller.—Price Twopence.

hamic covenant ; and thus the clear and beautiful light, which the whole Jewish dispensation was intended to throw over the gospel, is rendered not only obscure, but absolutely delusive. Others rest it on the idea of household baptism ; and, not only falsify the statements of Luke, but place them in direct opposition to those advanced by Paul. One advocate, as if in wanton boldness, denies the fact that any believer's baptism even existed in the first age ; and thus he impeaches the character of the apostles themselves, and denies the whole record of the Acts of the Apostles. Striking out the leading idea of John's dispensation, they make the herald of Christ no better than a Pharisee. If their cause were good, their zeal were deserving of praise ; but there is a madness in this method of reasoning for what cannot be supported, which wearies the patience in describing it.

Yet, in pleading for the *effects* of baptism, the case is still worse ; for here, the vital act of faith, by which the destinies of eternity are determined, is involved in obscurity. Instead of saying, " He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the Tractarians say, " He that is baptized shall be saved, unless he decline from the grace of baptism." Here the law of Christ is absolutely set aside ; and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a lie is put into the right hand of those who are ready to perish. But all this is concealed from the inquirer, by an apparently small mistake. One word is used in Scripture to express the act, or process, of producing and evolving life. Thus, by using the same verb it is said, " Abraham *begat* Isaac," " Sarah *bare* Isaac," and " Isaac *was born*." But these learned

disputants use and translate that word as though all these three transactions were the same. Presbyter and Aquila both blunder into this mistake. By this means they seem to get their Baptismal Regeneration from the Scripture ; but by this means the Scripture is perverted, reduced to absolute contradiction, and inquirers are grievously perplexed. If men do these things through ignorance, they ought to learn before they write or teach ; if they do it knowingly, their fault exceeds all condemnation that can be pronounced by man. The discourse of our Lord with Nicodemus is, thereby, turned to a fatal use ; the argumentation of Paul in Romans vi, Galatians iii, and Colossians ii, is broken down into absolute absurdity ; and obstructions are produced to repentance and faith, which are infinitely more fatal to inquirers after truth, than any that have ever been set up by the openly profane.

But fourthly, the advocacy of Baptismal Regeneration, and of its attendant errors, *weakens the energies of Christians in the work of God.*

When the English establishment was commenced by Augustine, the first emissary of Rome to England, who founded the Archiepiscopal see of Canterbury, the tithes granted for its use, were intended to supply a provision for supporting the clergy, the edifice in which they conducted their worship, and the poor. By appealing to charity on these three grounds, in spite of all the restrictions in mortmain, the property of the church increased, till, in the close of the reign of Henry VII., it was so vast, that the nation could not endure her exorbitant exactions. This absorption of national wealth, together with its extensive transportation to Rome, prepared the

way for the revolution, effected by Henry VIII. When the new establishment of Protestant Episcopacy became consolidated, it was, in the reign of Elizabeth, relieved of the poor by the invention of poor-rates ; which have increased, both in their pecuniary and immoral difficulties, to the present time. Church-rates were invented to meet the necessity of providing for the repair of the churches. By these means, the clergy were left in possession of the whole tithe ; and this, diminished by lay appropriations, but increased again by endowments and lands, has left the establishment in possession of an income, stated by some to be about £6,000,000 per annum for England, and £2,000,000 for Ireland, without the colonies. The Parliamentary Returns make it less, but there is every reason to suspect their accuracy. If, however, we take the estimate of £7,000,000 for England and Ireland, it will be near enough for our purpose ; and the daily increase of that property will soon make it reach an over stated account. Therefore, it is clear that this great nation is, notwithstanding all its difficulties, able to set apart, at least, seven millions sterling, per annum, for the support of religion ; but, when this is done, what is the result ? In the propagation and support of the delusion, which I have exposed in these exercises, that wealth is, for the most part, absorbed. The immense wealth and power of the Bishop of London, said by some to be too great for any government to leave in the hands of a single subject, is, at this moment, appropriated to the support of this delusion of baptismal, or, rather, sacramental grace. By other prelates the same doctrine has been avowed, with as much distinctness as we find it in the Charges of his Lordship of London. Through

the village districts of England, I have traced its operations myself, examining it in Cornwall, Devonshire, Worcestershire, Wiltshire, Northampton, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and certainly it is not wanting in this county of Kent. In these various districts, its operations are to be discovered in details which I cannot now narrate. Ireland is receiving the blight and curse of a disguised popery, from its operations. But none of the advocates, found in any district, labour without pay. They all take their quota of the £7,000,000 per annum. When this is added to the large proportion appropriated by men of no religion whatever, it will be seen how all this fund, for religious purposes, is turned aside from its legitimate use. If it be said that the error in question is the avowed doctrine of the church establishment; then, the whole sum which it appropriates in clergy, ceremonies, and schools, infected with this dogma, is a clear loss to the interests of true religion. In all her voluntary exertions in favour of personal religion, England is thus crippled and paralysed, by the incubus of this legalized sacramental absurdity. Under the pressure of this weight, it was found, a few years since, that something like £1,000,000 per annum was, notwithstanding, raised by the people for evangelical uses in the British empire; but, through the advocacy of infant baptism, with its supposed grace, and hereditary claims to the covenant of salvation, a large portion of this is turned away from its intended purpose. Christian charity is thus betrayed and insulted on every hand, in every day's experience, and by those who profess the highest regard for the Redeemer; until the real advo-

cates of personal religion, of every class, are, in the midst of abundance, reduced to comparative destitution. When any important object arises to demand attention, it finds the public resources drawn off, by force or fraud, to the very point of exhaustion; and the patience which Christianity generates and sustains, is almost worried down by a delusion, which, in its cravings, crieth like the horse-leech, "Give, give."

But this is not all. The advocates of personal religion have to sustain, in their weakness and poverty, the power which resists their progress, and the shame which covers their cause, in the revilings of their enemies. If these were in the world only, or acted in their *true* character, the difficulties they create would be of little moment: but, while the men are concealed by a religious garb, these difficulties are augmented beyond all calculation. Instead of the direct labour of leading sinners to Christ, the sweetest and best in which we can be engaged, we have to conflict with errors that have grown up for ages in the churches. The daughter of Jerusalem has now proved, in bitterness, that her chief enemies are those of her own house. Such as dare to encounter those evils at all, are almost sure to sacrifice themselves; and where the evils operate unmolested, they result in spiritual oppression, and open ungodliness.

Moreover, the evils of which we complain are not to be regarded as exceptions, the blame of which rests on individuals: they belong to the *systems advocated*, and form their essential elements. By the advocacy of Infant Baptism, and Promiscuous Baptism, with their supposed benefits, and the hereditary claim to the covenant of grace, men come to be regarded as Christians,

who are *not*; and who have *no* claim to confidence, as having been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and thereby subjected to the governance of Christ. These not only come to regard themselves in this character, but are so regarded by other men : they are so regarded in every nation where the Christian religion becomes known. Every dissolute adventurer in our colonies, who has thus been baptized in the name of Christ, presents himself to the heathen tribes, with all his glowing vices, as a *Christian*. By the heathen, he is so received in every land ; and thus the name of Christ, and His Gospel, are blasphemed every day on their account. To encounter their idolatrous delusions, and lead the heathen into paths of purity and devotion, is a heavy task ; but no missionary, labouring in the spirit of his work, has ever been so oppressed with its discouragements, as when he is called to sustain the afflictive and unrighteous odium, which, in every land, results from the baptismal heresy to the Christian name.

But it is not needful to traverse our extended colonies and foreign relationships. We have other illustrations nearer home. Nothing can weaken the activities of Christians in the work of God so effectually as a clear inconsistency. Our opponents know this, and, therefore, leaving many cogent truths unanswered, they snatch at any opportunity that may occur of finding an inaccuracy. What, then, must be the moral influence of the error under consideration ? It teaches, that persons regenerated in baptism, or inheriting, by birth, the covenant of mercy, which is said to be sealed to them in Baptism, thereby become children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven. Now, in all the subsequent

teaching of the church this declaration must be regarded either as *true* or *false*. By many it is regarded as true ; and hence, many teachers, who, for a few years past, have acquired the credit of being evangelical, because they taught the necessity of personal regeneration, have now declared themselves to mean, that regeneration and baptism are the same thing : and, therefore, that every person submitting to the baptismal rite is saved, unless he lose, by actual sin, the grace therein received.* Such as hold the hereditary claim to be valid, and real, and thence affirm that children of believers are born in the church, differ in the expressions they employ, but not in the results which they induce. By them it is affirmed, that such children have the inheritance, and are personally sealed ; but the compact of their baptism, and their right by birth, must be recognized by themselves, when they arrive at years of discretion. This "*recognition*," in the one case, stands in the place of the ceremony of "*confirmation*" in the other ; and both lead to false confidence and irreligion. Profession of faith is, in the one case, converted into *the recognition of an absurdity* : and, in the other case, it is made *the confirmation of a lie*.

A clearer illustration and proof of this statement cannot be desired, than that which is afforded in the fact, that such as are really concerned for personal religion and the salvation of souls, are unable to abide by the sacrament so administered, even in their own teaching. They treat it, as though the benefit ascribed to it amounted to nothing. When dealing with sinners

* See Note L.

respecting the necessity for conversion to God, and the renunciation of their sinful state, they are compelled by their compassion for souls, and by their regard for truth, to affirm, that their hereditary claim to the covenant of grace, and the spiritual gift of their baptism, will leave them at last without hope, unless the operations of divine truth effect an entire change in their hearts towards God. Such teachers cannot let their people pass, without reminding them, that their inheritance in the divine love cannot be secured, without a personal "repentance towards God, and faith in "our Lord Jesus Christ." They often go to a great length in this, and say that the baptism will do them no good; and not unfrequently claim to themselves great credit, for treating the whole question respecting the sacrament, as of no importance. But what is the result of such deportment? An absolute contradiction between the terms of the baptismal ceremony, and the terms of the general and subsequent teaching. The child is taught in his catechism, that he *inherited* the covenant by birth, or that in his baptism he was *made* a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; but now he finds the very teacher who baptized him affirming, that he also is a child of wrath even as others. He is urged to repent and flee to the Redeemer, as though he were born a Hottentot or a Caffre, and bred up in the wilds of Africa. The thanksgiving at his baptism is flatly contradicted, in the affirmation, "*Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.*" The consecrated lips of the priesthood are thus found to contradict themselves, in the very act of divine worship, and when speaking in the name of God. No explanation

has been given to meet the case. On this one point the extreme of *finesse* has been employed. Ingenuity has done its best; but a discrepancy remains by which the symmetry of truth is broken; and to this must be ascribed much of the Church's imbecility, when pressing her merciful overtures of salvation on mankind. Under these evils, the usefulness of the Church suffers an injury which no outward adversity could ever inflict. The baptismal error enters into its whole constitution, absorbs its resources, enfeebles its members, neutralizes its activity, and produces an apoplexy in the body of Christ.

Lastly, the advocacy of Baptismal Régeneration, and of its attendant errors, injures the interest of personal religion, by *preparing the strongest argument in favour of open infidelity.*

It must never be forgotten, that the gospel of Jesus Christ was given for the actual and daily use of mankind. Many of its promises are to be fulfilled in heaven, and for their accomplishment we must wait until time shall be exchanged for eternity; but many are intended to be fulfilled on earth. When the Lord, speaking to the weary and heavy laden, promised that by coming unto him they should find rest unto their souls, his intimation related not to the future world exclusively, but to this also; "for those who believe do "enter into rest," even here. In this world, vile as it is, amidst all its temptations, snares, and sorrows, those who are savingly united to the Saviour obtain, a "peace that "passeth understanding," a "joy unspeakable and full of "glory." Often as they become oppressed with guilt and sorrow, weakness and the claims of duty, they can find at his footstool, and in his atonement, a remedy for all

that may afflict them. The declaration that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," is, by them, reduced to daily and actual experiment. By them it is applied to the conscience, to heal its wounds and quicken its sensibilities, that their peace may be permanent and their lives pure. The bondage of sin is thus broken, and they come to inherit the glorious liberty of the children of God. They have not only the assurance that "all things shall work together for good;" but they glory in tribulation also, because the "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience." They thus advance from faith to faith, and rise to greater elevation in hope and joy. The gift and work of the Holy Spirit are, to them, not points of doctrine only, but things of actual occurrence and use. By His aid they understand the word; feel its power, form their wishes, and draw nigh to God in prayer. They ask, and they receive; they seek, and they find. Actual use affords to them the firmest and sweetest proof of reality in the gospel system; they do the things which Jesus hath commanded, and they know the things which Jesus hath spoken, that they are from heaven, and are not the inventions of artful men.

God intends that this shall form the firmest proof of reality in the gospel dispensation. The followers of Christ may have many things to justify their faith in Him supplied from history, the working of miracles and other evidence, but nothing is so strong a proof as their own experience of his love and power. They have tasted and handled of the word of life, and they cannot reject it, or doubt its stability. This evidence is also designed to act on sinners, as well as on saints. The holiness and

devotion of his own people upon earth, is the clearest evidence given by Christ to the world, that His gospel is worthy of all acceptation. Hence our Lord, speaking to His apostles, said "*Ye shall testify of me,*" and of all such it is affirmed, "*Ye are my witnesses.*" God's people are God's witnesses upon earth; and, that their testimony may be clear, that its effect may be powerful, and that their whole treatment may speak for his holiness, his mercy, and his truth, they are separated from the world and united in His Church. This is called His kingdom; the government of His Church is His reign upon earth. In this society His will is law; and, therefore, in that society God is known. There, obedience is proof of His power; there, the treatment of His servants and saints declares His wisdom, His mercy, His holiness, and love.

But the enjoyment of divine mercy, and the presence of God, in His Church, will always depend on its purity and obedience to his will. If his people forsake him, he will forsake them; and when they are forsaken of God, their society will be no witness for God, except as it reveals his judgment. Hence, he will have them pledged in the personal and sacramental act of baptism; that every man under his governance may not only be without excuse, but also be so declared by his own act and engagement. But all these objects are entirely frustrated, by the errors which we repudiate. By hereditary claims, the baptism of infants, and its supposed spiritual gifts, the constitution of the Church is corrupted on principle, by its own officers. Profane and unconverted persons are, without even their own choice, mingled with believers. The license in admitting members has become

so great, that, in the mass of Pædo-baptistical Churches, fellowship is no guide to character at all. No man thinks of concluding, because another belongs to the Church of Rome, of Germany, or of England, that therefore he is subject to the will of God, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. His conversion to God, and his fellowship in the church, have no relation to each other. As far as the hereditary principle is observed, this is also true with respect to Non-conforming Pædo-baptists. Hence, therefore, the circle of their fellowship can afford no distinct proof of that power, which is exercised by the gospel over those who receive it in sincerity. The society being promiscuous, and its moral compacts being set aside, the church in all these cases will be assimilated to the world. Its Christianity being only in name, its witness to the divine origin and power of Christianity will be inconclusive. If in any case the Church seems to differ from the rest of mankind, since the result is gained without conformity to the divine law, it will be attributed to the taste and inclination of the age, and not to the power of God in the operation of his truth. But the difference does *not* appear ; and hence the plea, that these churches are really Christian, loads the gospel with all the suspicion which results from their failure. Here is the great strength of infidelity. We can easily encounter the difficulties connected with history, and the arguments brought from theories of natural philosophy ; but the corruption of the church has turned her testimony *against* the truth, and rendered her in the experience of ages, the handmaid, if not the mother, of infidelity.

The importance of this remark results from this circumstance, that its truth depends not on any accidental modification of these churches, but on the rule adopted in their constitution. Nothing can be more just than to require, of every system propounded for the use of man, the legitimate results of its own principles. Hence we have no right to complain, if infidels ask us to show the effects of Christianity as we define it. If we assume that every child born of a believing parent has a right to, or is an inheriting party under, the covenant of grace; every infidel, and every man, has a right to ask for the fulfilment of that covenant, in those who thus inherit it. If we declare that every child, or man, who is baptized by certain officers of the church, is regenerate; the infidel and the heathen have a right to look for the fruit of regeneration, in those who have been thus baptized. In either case the result is just the same. The hereditary principle, and the baptismal regeneration yield the same result, which is not the professed result at all. Human nature is not influenced for the better, by either circumstance. In either case, the parties are proved to be subjects of the same corruptions with the rest of mankind. They are children of wrath even as others; and if these errors were really parts of the dispensation introduced by Christ, their universal failure in practice would render our belief of its divine origin an absolute impossibility. Of this we have proof that cannot be resisted; for the most evangelical opponents of infidelity are compelled to appeal, from the actual, to the legitimate results of divine truth, and thereby confess the imperfection with which it is applied in practice; while the Tractarians

meet this objection to their baptismal theory, by denying to man the use of private judgment, and affirming that it is our duty *not to examine* but to obey.

The following passage, published May 28th, 1842, by the *Rev. D. A. Parsons, M. A.*, Curate of Marden, and addressed to the Editor of the *Devizes Gazette*, is curious and exactly to the point. Referring to the subject of believers' baptism and Socinianism which he chooses to place in conjunction with each other, he says, "Such exercise of private judgment is no part of churchmen's privileges; rather they are mercifully spared the curse of it. They are baptized into the Catholic Church, and receive her Faith; that is to say, all those parts of Holy Scripture which are the subject matter of the mistakes issuing in heresy which have been now set down, are to them cleared and for ever settled by her decision. A churchman or churchwoman has no wavering doubtful words of private judgment, comfort for the Socinian. Their answer to his blasphemous heresy is, 'He that will be saved *must* thus think.' 'This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believes faithfully *he cannot be saved.*' And so of the other subjects of church teaching. The Church has dogmatically ruled thus and thus: and such and such things are not on their trial; and whatever they may be to those without the pale, to us they are objects of love and of faith. And, in a word, whatever the Church of England has decreed, that is to us law *in foro conscientie*, even if not (as may be) *in foro foro*, and is no subject for private judgment to us, whose duty is, whether we are priests or lay people, to obey."

I have quoted the passage literally for the sake of faithfulness ; but will not undertake to explain the whole of its clauses. Its leading idea accords precisely with the Church of Rome ; and it forms the last resource of all who defend this sacramental assumption. The defence is also chosen with discretion ; for, whatever else may be pleaded, so long as the right of private judgment be exercised by the people, the fetters of this domination never can be riveted. But, how it can be possible for any men to employ such a resource, without knowing that the ground they wish to maintain is untenable by an appeal to truth, is hard to conceive. For if we have no right to exercise our private judgment, why are all these publications issued in Oxford, in London, in Woolwich, in newspapers, magazines, and in every possible form, throughout this empire, if not throughout the world ? If we have no right to judge, why do they reason and appeal to Scripture ? If we are forbidden to think and inquire, why do they give us arguments ? Nay, why does the Church give to us arguments that conflict with each other ? For, on this great question, the advocates are as much at variance with each other, as they are with Scripture. Conflicting statements cannot be true and false at the same time. To say that the question has been settled by the Church, therefore, is untrue, for the Church is against the Church ; and, to forbid the use of private judgment, is to condemn themselves in appealing to private judgment. But the parties are guilty of this error, only in one case. They condemn the use of private judgment, only when the evidence goes against them. It is thus condemned by Presbyter, in the appeal to experience, which flatly

denies his theory of Baptismal Regeneration; and yet his whole work is an appeal to private judgment, on the interpretation which he thinks ought to be given to church authorities and Holy Scripture. But why should he condemn, in one case, what he uses in the other? The answer is plain. The experience of mankind he knew to be against him; but he thought he had some advantage in his appeal to Scripture. He rejects the use of private judgment, therefore, only when the exercise thereof is found fatal to his purpose. It only requires that Scripture shall be understood, and then the use of private judgment will be reprehended in its perusal, as much as in the appeal to experience. This refuge is never sought, until the fugitive has been possessed with a dread of evidence: then, since he wishes to escape the light, he will flee into this bush for shelter. Such a feeling is more remarkable, in this controversy, than in any other with which I am at all acquainted. It occasions real and deep bitterness frequently, to observe how this feeling evinces itself, even where it was least to be expected. Many, who would not forbid the use of private judgment, yet declare that silence is their strong-hold; and when the truth is thrown upon the position which they occupy, they shiver like the birds of darkness, and scream with abhorrence at the pertinacity with which the gloomy quiet of their slumber has been broken. Such pertinacity, in thinking and appealing to Scripture for ourselves, is reprehended with severity by all the advocates of a spiritual gift in baptism. This free inquiry, and obtrusive discussion, they cannot endure. They wish to state their own views as they please, and never to be answered. Cross-

questioning, and revisions of the argument, they abhor. Therein they show their position to be bad ; and by thus adhering to it, in the failure of evidence to prove its propriety, they injure the interests of personal religion, by dishonouring the name they bear.

And what, after all, is the benefit for which this hot and cowardly conflict is maintained ? I answer, *a fiction*, an *absurdity*, and nothing more. As far as the *subject* of baptism is concerned, the Church is made to promise it a gift, a spiritual gift, to point out the supposed importance of which, the power of human language is said to be inadequate ; and yet, the fruits of it are found in the experience of no one ; and the reality of it is denied in the history of every alehouse, prison, and penitentiary in the land. As far as the *Church* is concerned, it gives to her clergy a certain hold on the instinctive sentimentalities of undisciplined minds ; and by appealing to irrational passion, acquires a fictitious importance for her priesthood : but the grandeur of her simplicity is lost, and her solemn trust is betrayed into the hands of a merciless infidelity. For these vain imaginations, the purity and fellowship of the spiritual Church are relinquished, the Holy Scriptures are corrupted and misapplied, inquirers after truth are surrounded with perplexity, the resources of Christians are absorbed, and their activities in the work of God are enfeebled ; the actual fulfilment of divine promises is covered over with obscurity ; and a bulwark is erected, behind which infidelity may lurk in safety, watching for advantage against the souls of men. Instead of being insignificant, a greater moral evil has never risen up in this world ; and in their devotion to this sacramental heresy, Christians have

bitterly verified that word of God, "*They that forsake me despise their own mercies.*"

But we are not at liberty to rush headlong into judgment. The blame of all this injury cannot be attributed to any one class of men. Society at large contains the element out of which it springs. Men will follow those who please them ; and the strongest argument in this controversy is, *The people love to have it so.* Without this fact, all other reasoning would fall powerless to the earth. Imagination gathers round those points in human existence, images of good and ill, which dazzle and affright the excited parents, leading them far away from the sober realities of truth and prudence. While such infatuation is cherished by the people, men will never be wanting to take advantage of the propensity. With you, therefore, more than in any argument, will be found the cure. If an aversion to inquiry be cherished, no man has any just reason to expect that he will ever attain the truth : it is too delicate and heavenly to be acquired by any but those who love it supremely. God hath so ordained his government for our discipline ; and those who love delusion, will always find it waiting to inflict its manifold injuries on their most important interests. Rise, therefore, brethren, I beseech you, to the dignity of your calling ; and, by all the sacredness which attends the best interests of your offspring, the churches of Christ, and the nation in which you live, labour to understand the law of your Redeemer, for only observing this, can those interests be secured. Divine teaching will never be withholden, when you have become faithful to yourselves. Only "let your eye be *single*, and your "whole body shall be full of light."

I shall endeavour, next Tuesday evening, as announced in the hand-bills, to fulfil my promise of describing the advantages, which result from a strict adherence to the Saviour's law of baptizing accredited believers only. This will be a far more pleasant task ; although that, which I have just finished, was necessary to a faithful discharge of my duty. I have now, only to thank you, for your prolonged and courteous attention.

LECTURE V.

ON THE ADVANTAGES DERIVED TO PERSONAL RELIGION,
FROM A STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE SCRIPTURAL RULE
OF BAPTIZING ACCREDITED BELIEVERS ONLY.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, the substance of what has already been advanced, may be stated in a very few words. The original subject of dispute was, *the supposed reality of "a spiritual gift in Baptism,"* whether it be designated Regeneration, or be called by any other name. The origin of this idea we traced, through Cyprian and Valentine, to the Asiatic philosophy ; we found it, after revision in the Council of Trent, proclaimed as the basis and strength of the ecclesiastical system contended for at Rome, and retained by the Protestant communities when they separated from her communion. It was also retained by the Westminster Assembly, and by those who adhered to the documents, which were prepared and published by that body of divines ; and its advocacy has been revived by the Tractarians, and others, at the present time, who, in their defence of the dogma, have appealed to sacred Scripture. In examining their appeal to Scripture, we took their own passages, admitted many of their own interpretations, and found, in the conclusion, that those very passages not only do not prove the spiritual gift in Baptism, for which those teachers plead, but absolutely condemn the Baptism of

Infants, and the Promiscuous Baptism, which they uphold ; so that, instead of sustaining their expectation of "a spiritual gift in Baptism," their own authorities condemn the whole ceremony which they administer. Farther, the error thus propagated, by these teachers, in the name of Christ, but in defiance of his authority, has been shown not only to inflict the deepest injury on personal religion, but also to prepare the easiest transition into open infidelity, and to become the strongest bulwark that defends its malignant and fatal operations.

Baptismal Regeneration, therefore, with all its attendant errors, is, when judged by the evidence which its own advocates have supplied, destitute of any just claim to our reverence, or even respect ; and it justly deserves to be discarded as an element of heathenish and idolatrous corruption. Until the contrary has been proved, therefore, and other evidence has been produced than any that has ever yet been used, by its advocates, in forcing it upon public attention ; we dare not become implicated in its delusive absurdities. We willingly submit to God, and find our joy in his service ; and, where his honour is not impeached, we rejoice in holding fellowship with men ; but, whatever the consequence, we submit to none, we join with none, in violating the laws of our Redeemer, and giving up his sanctuary to heathenish pollutions. Before the Gospel has consummated the benefits, which God intends thereby to confer on his believing people, no small affliction obviously awaits them in his service : but with these things we are not to be dismayed ; in every manifestation of his will, duty is ours ; the results remain with him.

Timidity, in carrying out the purposes of God by

strictly adhering to his laws and institutions, is, in fact, altogether out of place: it involves an impeachment of his wisdom, or of his faithfulness, and, generally, of both. When properly considered, such a state of mind implies the extreme of rashness; for those who forsake him, despise their own mercies. He always fulfils his designs, by means that are most simple and least expensive; oftentimes hiding the laws, by which he acts, in wisdom which is to us unsearchable. An atom may thus be made, by Him, to hold in poise the elements of an universe. To us, that atom may appear quite insignificant, it may even elude our observation altogether; but the importance of its existence and position is determined, by the benefits which result from its arrangement and influence on all the universe, of which it forms a part. Temerity consists, not in leaning and resting on the law of God, but in altering it. "His way is perfect, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."

While such perfection shines in all the physical creation, nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that, in the work which most engaged his love, and where his acts of mercy were designed to awe, delight, and benefit angelic millions, through all eternity; and where, with bounty inconceivable, he gave to our necessity his own dear Son, there his ordinances should be defective. While no insect, no flower, no production of this earth, passes from his hand so as to admit of one improvement, even from the greatest effort of created genius; here, where all the fruit of a Redeemer's sufferings must be gained, and where the glory of his grace must be involved for ever,—here, in the church and household of the living God,—shall men change, and set aside with

thoughtless levity, and, yet suppose that they improve the ordinances of heaven? The thought is execrable. Sooner might we improve a healthy vision, by burnishing the eye-ball with a stone. No effort of created minds can improve the ordinances of eternal wisdom; and their perfection will be seen, not more distinctly in the fields of nature, than in the church of Christ.

The utter futility of such vain designs has already been exhibited, in the last exercise. By the alterations which men have dared to make in the Christian ordinance of Baptism, we then saw that they did not produce a system more perfect, pure, and edifying, than that which Jesus Christ appointed before he rose to heaven. Instead of this, they changed the whole constitution of the church, and reduced it to a mere worldly society, rendering the culture of its holy fellowship utterly impracticable; they rendered the corruption of holy Scripture necessary to the support of their ecclesiastical systems; they augmented the difficulties of inquirers, in attaining the truth of God; they enfeebled the operations of the church, in all the work of mercy with which she is entrusted; and they produced the strongest argument for open infidelity. Thus they inflicted the deepest injury on our species, where they professed to confer a richer benefit than the grace of Christ; and, where they sought to appear wiser than God, there the records of their folly have produced the darkest page in all the history of mankind.

Our illustration of these facts, will, in the present exercise, be reversed. Instead of pointing out the *injuries* which flow from Baptismal Regeneration, Infant Baptism, and Promiscuous Baptism: we shall set

forth, as briefly as possible, the *benefits*, which wait to be realised by a strict observance of the law of Christ. From those passages, which were selected by the advocates of "a spiritual gift in Baptism," it has been shown already that the law of Christ enforces and authorizes *the Baptism of accredited believers only*. Our blessed Lord never supposes, much less affirms, that infants dying without baptism will be punished with an everlasting ruin for the sin of Adam. He knew the Father of mercies too well. The sin of Adam was forgiven in paradise, through the redemption to be wrought by the promised seed ; and, though his posterity is made to bear the disadvantages of a fallen state, they are not condemned for the sin of their parent so long ago forgiven : but, passing out of the world without being guilty of actual transgression, through the event of mortality, the resurrection from death, and all needful mercy procured for them by the atonement of Christ, they are delivered from every evil consequence of sin, and saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation. By sovereign grace, they are delivered from the trial which attends the probation of earth, and trained for glory in the immediate presence of the Lord. The Christian discipline, conducted and enjoyed by men here, is intended for the use of those whom God permits to live, and serve him, in this world. Before their eyes, is set the absolute necessity of personally receiving the Christ, as their only Saviour. This they are to be taught from their infancy. All the parental instincts, with that immense moral power which maternal tenderness, properly exercised, will produce, are claimed in this service, for God, and for their good.

Every effort is to be made by Christian parents, with all prayer, to this end, that their children may be led to learn of Christ; and, to seek by repentance and faith, their whole salvation in his atonement, guidance, and assistance. When they have so learned Christ, they are to be baptized into his family, and numbered with believers, who shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth. This is the law given to all mankind, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."

By this law, *faith and baptism are essentially united*: it authorizes and enjoins the Baptism of none other than believers. This law we have seen confirmed by all those passages of Scripture, which those, who reject that rule, have advanced in favour of their own system. It is the law of God in Christ, therefore, that Baptism should be administered in his Church to believers only. It imposes on every believer, who hopes for salvation in Christ, the duty of receiving the immersion in his name: it imposes, on every church, the duty of providing that this immersion, in the name of Christ, be administered to every sinner, who gives a credible profession of his faith: it binds each church to receive into its fellowship, as a brother or sister in the Lord, every such baptized believer: and it authorizes the Baptism (immersion) of none other, than such accredited believers. Such is the law of the Lord. It is not left for us to choose whether it shall be enacted, or whether it be expedient; these points have been determined by Jesus Christ himself. He hath ordained it, and caused it to be written; our only business is to obey. Nor is it left

for us to determine whether its observance shall prevail ; for thus saith the Lord, " heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

On such a subject, we admit of no objection, founded on what may to men seem expedient ; for divine law is expediency defined by infinite wisdom. We may not always understand this fact, just at the time when God requires obedience at our hands : but, even in the darkest dispensations, it is evolved, and proved, by all experience. It is proved in the case before us : for while, as hath been seen, the alteration of this law dishonours the Redeemer in his Church, by inflicting on religion the severest injuries that it can suffer from mankind on earth : a strict observance of this law proffers blessings, to the church and to the world, which glorify the Saviour who ordained it.

We shall trace these blessings, first, in *the influence which this obedience to the law of Christian Baptism exerts over the constitution and fellowship of the Church.*

This is just the opposite of that which was stated in the last exercise. By Baptismal Regeneration, Promiscuous Baptism, and the Baptism of Infants, the Church is thrown open to the world ; and the society set apart by our Lord for cultivating and indulging the fellowship of saints, is *polluted* and *betrayed* : but, by the law of baptizing accredited believers only, this family of God is separated from the world, and guarded by the care of all its members. By this the church realizes, in the law of her own constitution, the declaration of St. Peter, " But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a " holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show

“forth the praises of him who hath called you out of
 “darkness into his marvellous light; who, in time past,
 “were not a people, but are now the people of God;
 “who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained
 “mercy.” (1 Peter ii. 9, 10.)

In the description of this peculiar society, it is not possible to employ stronger language than that which is found in almost every part of the New Testament. The privilege of its members is that of children, in a common household: for, they are all children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus; they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ. Their “fellowship” is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” The spirit of their fellowship is called “the spirit of adoption.” The “hope of their calling” is the highest and the most lasting good, that God has ever promised to mankind. The business of their calling is the most sacred of all occupations, involving the greatest display of divine glory, and the most endearing interests of a ruined world. In the prosecution of those objects, they have to recognize in each other the most stupendous acts of divine wisdom and power, and to reciprocate the most endearing confidence and affection. No relationship can be more intimate, or admit of possible results so full of durable importance, as that of saints, with saints in the church of Christ; and, therefore, none has been protected with such solemn care. By this law, the good Shepherd guards his fold from beasts of prey; and, in the observance of this law, his sheep may enjoy that separation from sinners, which is essential to their quiet and prosperity.

Before the society of Christians can secure the end for

which it was instituted, it must be made select; and this law, uniting (as it does) with that which regulates the discipline of offenders, fixes the attention of every member on this indispensable arrangement. It is, moreover, the attention of brethren, not that of enemies; it is actuated by love, and not by enmity. The charity, which each expects, is exercised by all: and the love of their common Lord forms an incentive to unceasing faithfulness. As all interests are subordinate to that of their society, so all have a common concern in maintaining the purity of that character on which it is based. They can be merciful to the world, from which they are separate; and urge, by every means, the overtures of compassion by which they are saved; but, to themselves, and to each other, they are to be mercifully severe. They cannot, locally, go out of the world, and thus be separate from sinners; but if any man that is called *a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or unclean, while he holds that relation to the church, they must not even eat with him. By the submission to his baptism, each one has crucified the world, with its affections and lusts, declaring, in the act, that he is a candidate for holiness: he is, therefore, to be treated by this law; and experience shows its healthy operations. Without this law of admission to the church, no consistent basis will be found, on which to rest the severe discipline which is, by the law of Christ, applicable to offences: but, when its strict observance is combined with faithful discipline, it gives protection to the brotherhood in Christ, and forms a society in which a Christian love and confidence must be reciprocated by all believers admitted to its fellowship.

Two cases, constantly occurring in private life, may serve to show the great importance of this result. By the apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. vi. 1—8, the members of the church are forbidden to go to law with each other, especially before the unbelievers. The effect of this regulation was, to make all the disputes respecting property referrible only to arbitration, among the brethren of the Christian fellowship. In 1 Cor. vii. 39, the formation of marriage compacts is restricted, by the expression “only in the Lord.” By this I understand, that such compacts are to be formed in absolute subjection to his teaching. But, since the Lord commands them to come out from the world, and be separate, it never could be his will that Christians should intermarry with unbelievers, unless the compact had been formed before the conversion of one party. All the security of these two great personal interests, therefore, must be derived from the purity of the Church. Promiscuous communion would expose them, and a faithful administration of the Saviour’s law would guard them. In like manner, it is said, “Confess your faults one to another ;” (James v. 16;) a thing which would become both injurious, and most repulsive, if Christians were not distinguished from unconverted men. The exercise of Christian beneficence would make the church a poor-house for the world, if her society and obligations were not guarded by the laws of admission and discipline. Those commands, which require combined exertion in the cause of truth, would stand for nothing, if nothing marked the persons on whom they were imposed. Her highest offices and privileges will neither be understood nor valued, when the citizens of Zion are bereft of their distinctive title to them. All

that relates to mutual edification and united worship, and to the holy reciprocations of Christian experience and love, those blessed and refreshing approximations to the heavenly state, are absurdity in promiscuous communion. These things are common only to regenerated men : the most polished hypocrite can take no part therein. But these sublime peculiarities of the Christian Church, when duly guarded by the Saviour's law, enrich her fellowship beyond conception, and give her, even upon earth, the nearest approximation, both in glory and in happiness, to the New Jerusalem.

By baptizing accredited believers only, we guard the entrance into the Church of God ; and thus we protect the members of his family, in the enjoyment of their privileges, and in the performance of their duties. If a true Christian be found in the society of the world, he is out of his place ; and his whole life, to be consistent with himself, must be a deviation from the ordinary rule observed by his associates : so, if a man of the world be introduced into the Church, his life becomes an exception to the rules of that society, and he is thus shown to be out of place. Worldly society, therefore, is deranged by the presence of a sincere Christian ; if he be known in that character, his presence is a rebuke ; and Christian society is deranged, in like manner, by the presence of unbelieving and unconverted sinners, for one such person will disturb its harmony and holy fellowship. This law of Christ is, therefore, given to guard, as a porter, the entrance of his sheepfold ; and to form a basis for all discipline, in the society of his followers. What more is needed, for the protection and salvation of his people, he himself will supply. He knew, and intimated, that no

human power could prevent the recurrence of offences : but he pronounced a heavy woe on him, by whom the offence cometh. He might have inflicted that, without any intervening rule of discipline whatever : but he has otherwise ordained ; and thereby he will, eventually, aggrandise his judgment, and show, to all, the righteousness of their punishment. Having separated his people from the world, he makes himself known in their midst ; and vindicates his own name in the persons who trust and wear it, by exhibiting his glory in their protection, their obedience, and their everlasting salvation.

Within the enclosure of the Church, too, as thus defined by its Redeemer's law, each Christian may cherish the most perfect peace, while prosecuting every purpose of his holy calling, and using all the privileges which are given to the children of God. There he may be at home. It is not heaven, but the next place to it ; the place in which he is preparing for it, and where the sweetest foretastes of its felicity are enjoyed. Here, in the spirit of adoption, Christians can draw nigh and serve their Father who is in heaven : as priests, they can discharge their holy functions, supplicating mercy for themselves and for a ruined world : and as kings, entrusted with the objects and laws of a kingdom in this distant province, they may run all risks in executing their solemn trust. When this law of baptism, at the entrance, and that of a faithful fraternal discipline in the interior, have been observed, the Church may leave her safety with her God. For all that follows, she is not responsible : but she is for this. When these arrangements of infinite wisdom have been submitted to, the Church may prosecute her great

designs with confidence: for he, by whom she was redeemed, will not withhold the guidance and the help which she may require, to execute her functions.

Secondly, a farther advantage will be derived from a strict observance of the Saviour's law of baptizing accredited believers only, *in the facility which it gives to the interpretation and use of Sacred Scripture.*

From the very moment in which the notion of a spiritual gift in baptism came to be maintained, and more especially since Infant Baptism and Promiscuous Baptism resulted from it; the difficulty of reconciling the words of Scripture to the practice of the Church, has been felt increasingly painful. More than a thousand years have been spent in this fruitless task, and the labour of those years has been vainly expended. The greatest genius has been employed in the effort; and subterfuges, infinitely various, have been fruitlessly devised: for, every new invention has produced increasing difficulty, attended, as we have seen, with consequences most injurious and absurd. Instead of gaining a position where they may court inquiry, the advocates of these errors are compelled to ask for silence, out of charity, and to plead an obscurity in the laws of Christ. By this they seem to lay the blame on God; but really it falls upon themselves and on their theories. "The law of the Lord is perfect;" and all the seeming difficulty in the case flows from their mis-interpretation. Their practice, not the Saviour's law, must be condemned. When once we have consented to baptize accredited believers only, and to make the Church consist only of sinners converted by the truth, no difficulty remains

in reconciling the clear injunctions of Holy Scripture to our practice, or in cherishing within the Church the hope of all its promises. All that relates to sacraments and discipline then becomes perfectly plain ; and the use of it perfectly easy. If through early associations, and bad instructions, we may have risen from the general deluge of this sacramental error, with something yet to be unlearned, and some things yet to be acquired in Christian truth and duty ; herein we share with others the sad results of papal darkness. This we deplore and renounce, in every case wherein it is detected. Without perfection, however, advantage over other systems, may be possessed ; and this we have. By observing the Saviour's law, in baptizing accredited believers only, we find a full accordance between our practice and the Holy Scriptures. We can obey in peace, and invite inquiry ; we ask no charitable silence. The scriptures, "*as they are*," are our authority and support. We need no garbled version : our ground is strengthened, by translating every word. From this point the path is plain to every other application of divine truth ; whether it relate to the cultivation of personal piety, spiritual joy, the fellowship of Christians, the conversion of sinners, or any restoration of the Church from Popish defilement.

Moreover, the open consecration of church members, and the direct use of Holy Scripture, lead to a third advantage, *in the promotion of personal improvement*. The baptized believer is committed to the maintenance of a new character in the church, in the family, and in the world. He not only knows this himself, but it is known also to others, whether they be the friends or the enemies

of divine truth. A powerful moral influence is thus made to bear upon him and regulate his reasoning, emotions, and action. He becomes like a beacon on an eminence, an object of general observation. He can no longer be hidden. In the fellowship of Christian brethren, he stands responsible for all its duties ; not only on the general principles of right and wrong, but also on his own confession of the Saviour's claims, and his love for the person and glory of the Saviour. So long as a man's devotion to the Saviour remains uncertain to himself and others, the large portion of Holy Writ, which is addressed exclusively to believers, must be to him of doubtful application. Hence proceed the feebleness and uncertainty, which so often attend upon its use. By a wrong moral position, men lose that direct power which divine truth and actual events are designed to exert, in forming their character. If Christian baptism be administered to believers only, and be by any believer voluntarily declined, that disobedient believer (if such he may be called,) escapes the effect of external observance, and frequently the judgment of his own conscience. He hides himself from the truth, in the crowd of unbelievers. But, if baptism be promiscuously administered to persons, whether they be known to have believed or not ; the ordinance ceases to be distinctive, and loses its effect. Then the hiding place is found within the Church itself ; and, though a sincere disciple, he loses the moral influence of his position. Neither the precepts, nor the promises of Christ, will then apply to the church, any more than to the world. If the man be not a sincere believer, the case is so much the worse : for promiscuous baptism and fellowship destroy the

power of all the instrumentalities provided for effecting his conversion. It is wonderful that any should be saved, under such a system. This delusion of the sanctuary exceeds, in pernicious power, any that has ever been devised in the world. By stedfastly adhering to the Saviour's law, the power of this delusion is destroyed. Every baptized person then becomes an avowed believer; and if the promises and exhortations addressed to believers, in the New Testament, do not apply to him, he falls under its censure as a deceiver or an apostate. He is thus shut up to consistency or condemnation. The effect of this practice is found in the church, where brotherly faithfulness is sweetened with brotherly love; it is felt in the world, where personal inspection is sharpened by worldly hate; it is felt in the family, where ties the most endearing call for the constant exercise of Christian principle, and where his own lessons from the word of God show the law to which the baptized believer is subjected. The eyes of all are upon him; and all know him to be a man confessedly subjected to the Saviour's law. Before his children, if a father; before his servants, if a master; in the mart, if he be a man of business; in the circles of his friendship, if he be a friend; in the church, of which he is a member; and before angels, who learn through that church the manifold wisdom of God;—everywhere, he stands committed as a follower of Christ in the regeneration. Moreover, the eye of God is upon him, and the baptized person is made to feel, that the name, which he thus assumed, must be honoured in his person, by consistent advances in holiness, or by exemplary punishment for his delinquency.

Fourthly, by the moral power which is thus concentrated, a farther advantage is obtained, *in the acquisition and use of resources fitted for active exertion*. The Church on earth was never intended to form an inoperative body. By a holy and compassionate aggression on the kingdom of darkness, she is bound to urge the recovery of its victims from the power of sin, enforcing a willing obedience to the commands of God. The only method, which the Church can employ in this work, is that of persuasion ; the only agents, which she can employ in this work, are her own members ; and the means are such, as these members can bring into the work of proclaiming the gospel of salvation to sinners. We may very conveniently divide her resources for the work of God into two classes, *men* and *money*. By the law of Christ, all the members of the Church, and all their resources, are consecrated to his service. Each must be in his place ; and, in his place, each member, by carefully studying the import and application of the Lord's instructions, must decide for himself on the nature and extent of his own responsibilities. Each baptized believer, therefore, becomes a trustee for Christ, in the Church, to the exact amount of all the resources committed to his care, whether they be one talent or ten. He is not only obliged to use his utmost care, not to misapply those resources himself ; but he is also compelled to see, that he is not a party to their misapplication in others. Hence, the watchful care with which a Church of baptized believers looks to the appointment of its pastor, its agents, and various instrumentalities of usefulness. Everything lucrative, or capable of being made lucrative, is guarded by the inspection of devoted and

responsible men. If any one detects a deviation from propriety, he is bound not to conceal it. As a steward, he must be faithful. The purity of the Church is, therefore, the protection of its resources, and the security of their supply. When her society has been corrupted by promiscuous baptism and promiscuous fellowship, the Church can hardly be expected to feel much concern for the kingdom of her Lord, or the support of his institutions. She will then be careful only for her own convenience; and, with the influx of worldly men, she will also imbibe a worldly selfishness. Hence proceeds a fact, worthy of lamentation with tears of blood. The so-called Christian Churches are neither few nor small, which will not move one member in the cause of Christ, until they are drawn by flattery, or driven by force. The latter of these expedients results from the former. When an absurd and compromising charity, by misapplying Christian ordinances, and admitting as true, things which are known to be false, has succeeded in making society, within the Church, *promiscuous*; then the worldly interests of mankind become confounded with the spiritual: and religion, with all her holy things, is degraded from her holy exaltation, and made an instrument of human policy. Then the Church has nothing to command, until she is herself commanded by the world. Having lost her purity, she has lost her strength. Her simple institutions, and her holy aim, command no reverence from unconverted and unholy men. They will not give themselves to her ministry, or to works of Christian love, unless they can be gratified with gain or worldly advantage. When these elements of personal gratification can be supplied, such men will urge their

way to the enjoyment of them, through any violations of truth and principle, breaking down the confidence of Christian love, with their impositions. From this source, as from a fountain, evils flow in streams, through every portion of religious society. What such worldly persons cannot do by flattery and imposition, they labour to effect by force. Where divine law yields them no support, but only condemns them, they seek the help of human legislation. The community of Christians is thus oppressed, and robbed, and peeled, by legalized sacrilege, perpetrated in the name of Christ. Wealth, and time, and energy, beyond all calculation, are thus wasted in combating and counteracting evils, which grow up in the Christian community, from this adulterous misappropriation of Christian ordinances, and promiscuous fellowship with unconverted men. A strict adherence to the Saviour's law would save the Church from all this most disgraceful misery. If Christians were distinguished from the world, as Christ commanded, every evil thus inflicted on the Church, would obviously come from adversaries ; and, being stripped of its disguise, the concealment would be taken away from the causes which produce this injury. When Christians are separated from the world by the ordinance of their initiation, and kept separate by a healthy fraternal discipline, they can count their own number, estimate their own resources, choose and conduct their own operations, with prudence : they can reprove, rebuke, and exhort each other, with all freedom and faithfulness ; the occasion for activity may be explained to every member, and each becomes accountable for what he has at his command. Each operative movement is then conducted under the

inspection of the whole Church ; and the force of its demand, for support, is measured by its merits. A *healthful* moral influence is thus made to penetrate the body of Christ, and act on all its members : all must be prudent, but all must be active ; and whatever the whole body is required to undertake, it will, by its Redeemer, be enabled to sustain.

Fifthly, the advantage of obedience to this rule will be found, *in the advancement of early piety*. It is here that the advocates of Infant Baptism, and Promiscuous Baptism, profess to gain their high advantage. They think, by these unauthorised and unscriptural ceremonies, to give completeness to the laws of Christ. Appealing to parental instincts, they gain an influence in society which is undefinable, and which those who submit to it are ashamed to confess. This circumstance alone would be sufficient to condemn the error ; for what man was ever yet unwilling to declare a feeling which he knows to be right ? In this, however, the instinct rises over reason ; and when the victims of delusion have observed or enforced their ceremony, some, who wish to defend it, *deny* that it communicates any benefit whatever. In this class of Pædo-Baptists, there is an inconsistency which confounds them. To enforce their rite, they make it *beneficial*, as I have shown ; to defend themselves in practising it, they make it *worthless*. Others are more bold. They come forth with the baptismal gift, and openly affirm that it is necessary to salvation. Still, if we press them hard, they shift their ground. *To escape the consequence of their position, they say, that this gift is not conversion ; and, that conversion follows after it. Thus, they become confounded with their own state-

ments, and the word of God ; for, in their baptismal service, they, in an address to the Almighty, recognized these unconverted recipients of Baptism, as children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Thus they are found forsaking the substance, to snatch at shadows. As the delusion operates on ministers and parents, it is much to be deplored : the former being made to contradict himself when discharging the highest functions of his office ; and the latter being beguiled with delusive hopes, and led away from the true object of domestic teaching. All that mighty power, with which a pious mother is invested, thus becomes diverted from its right use. If, in the false security of her delusion, religious instruction be not altogether neglected, (which is the miserable case of millions,) her domestic teaching will be tinctured with this sacramental absurdity. By the force of maternal instinct, she shudders at the idea that her child is, with all the temptations and uncertainties of life, in actual danger of everlasting ruin : and, to escape it, she leans on the hope of its baptismal gift. That on which she leans herself, she teaches to her child. Instead of fixing his undivided attention, on the absolute necessity of learning the will and work of Christ, repenting of sins, and placing all his hope of salvation on personal faith in the atonement ; the child is filled with false ideas of “a spiritual gift” in Baptism, or an hereditary claim to the covenant of grace. Instead of being urged to become a member in the body of Christ, by faith in Jesus and repentance for sin ; the child is taught, even by his own mother, that he was born a member of the church, or that he was made a child of God in Baptism. Thus, with monstrous care, delusion,

waiting at the birth, watches to entangle unoffending infancy. If these consequences be charged home upon the advocates of all this folly, they modify the sense of their expressions, and say they did not mean it. This is infamous. If they do not mean, that children are born inheritors of the covenant, or that they are made children of God in Baptism, why do they say it? Their answer is, *we use the words in a very modified sense*. If so, they ought to send a dictionary with their books; that men may know how to understand them. But, while they use this language in a double sense, how will it affect the children? Will they be able to understand the *very modified sense*, in which these words are used by the controversialist; and distinguish it from the *very common sense*, in which they appear to be employed in their Catechisms, and their Prayer Book? Never. It is impossible. The Catechisms, and the Prayer Book, all appeal to Scripture; and every child, who learns to read it, will find the same, or similar expressions, in the eighth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans; and in his simplicity he will, and ought to, take them in both places as if used in the same sense. If he be told that they are employed in his Catechism *in a very modified sense*, then a thousand absurd distinctions must be made, in comprehending which, the difficulty of a child may be inferred, from the wrathful floundering of his teachers. In fact, they have no chance of escaping, without a miracle of mercy: and hence, as by a marshy vapour gleaming through the night, millions are led away by this "strong delusion;" some, in discouragement, to irreligion and profligacy; others, with delusive

hopes, "to believe a lie," and to trust in a formality which is not less fatal than irreligion itself.

These statements are more than confirmed, by the history of this delusion submitted in my second Lecture: and the proof will become more painfully clear, by descending to particular cases in the experience of households. Such is not the case with the Redeemer's law. By observing it, though Christians may not, in every case, avoid the operations and results of human depravity, they are, at least, delivered from the painful idea, that its power has been increased by their own unauthorized religious observances. By this, at least, a clear case is set before the child. If he ask, Why was my father baptized? The answer is, because of his repentance and faith in Christ. If he ask, Why was I not baptized? he is told, because you have not yet evinced your repentance and faith. If he say, Cannot I be saved without it? The reply is given, in the words of our Lord, "except ye repent, ye shall surely perish." The child is thus made to feel his fearful association with the wicked, until he becomes separated by actual conversion. The father is made to feel it. The mother is made to feel it. The fact is testified to the whole house, by this ordinance, in its right administration. By this, the instinctive and parental affection is turned to the right object, and operates in a right direction. It defines the object of principal solicitude, and vitalizes the feeling in seeking it. Every lesson of the mother is made to bear upon that point: she teaches her child what he is to believe, of what he is to repent, and from what he is to turn away. Parental solicitude is roused

in the act of supplication ; and those, who use this law rightly, will often join in special, and protracted supplication for the child. They will pray for its conversion to God ; because they know that otherwise it never can be saved. To the results which follow, in this direction, from the law of Christ, many a joyful testimony can be borne, by parents who rejoice in the fellowship of their children in the body of Christ. When mercy has been shown to one, and that one is received by baptism into the Church ; it forms an epoch in the history of the household, and needs no explanation, but that he has repented and believed. The new position, that he occupies, forms a constant admonition and encouragement to the rest. They are stimulated in learning, inquiry is awakened, supplication in the family becomes individualized, and filled with increased fervency ; and God is pleased to answer it, for such events seldom come alone. Faithful and obedient piety thus obtains its rich reward : while error and disobedience to the Saviour's law, garnished though they may be by imagination, yield no other consequences than such as we are bound to deplore.

Sixthly, a strict adherence to the Saviour's law, in baptizing accredited believers only, *affords the very best means of confounding and resisting infidelity.*

I do not, in stating these advantages, mean to affirm that they are all, and always, improved, by every Baptist Church : this must be determined by other evidence. On the other hand, it must not be supposed that Pædobaptists have no means, whereby the pernicious operations of infidelity can be resisted ; for such a statement would not be true. But this we do affirm, that every

departure from the law of Christ necessarily entails a disadvantage here. By arguments, founded on the facts of history, and by a judicious use of well attested miracles, we may do much to prove the divine authority of the Christian system. But *experience* is, after all, the most decisive proof. Like the theorems of natural philosophy, the gospel must be subjected to experiment. If it be true that there is a God in heaven, who, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, waits to hear and answer the supplications of believing and repenting sinners; to them he must display his mercy, in acts of forgiving love, in guiding, and supporting the recipients of his mercy. In them, the reality of his governance and perfections must be shown, by real events, transpiring in the business of every day. He is their God, and they are his people. They submit to his laws, and live for his glory; and he becomes their portion, their exceeding great reward. By this actual commerce between God and men, the theory of divine governance is led out of the regions of abstraction, and brought within the range of practical use. While saints are touching, and tasting, and handling the good word of life; unbelievers may see, in them, an actual experience of the things which they themselves deny.

In order that such a system may have any effect upon observers, its application and use must be made perfectly obvious. By whatever means this becomes obscured, the force of convincing evidence must be diminished. When nothing characterizes the persons who adhere to the governance of God, no one will know where to look for its beneficial or admonitory effects. Such then is the result of Infant Baptism, Promiscuous Baptism,

the baptismal gift, and promiscuous communion. The doctrine of "*a spiritual gift in baptism*" leads inquiry where, to the whole theory, events give a flat denial. Infidels will say with justice, if this spiritual gift have any existence, and comes from God ; it must, like every other divine arrangement, be seen in its results : but here are no results at all. If all the Christian system be just what we find in this supposed part of it, it is not worth a straw. Where this delusion is not relinquished, Infant Baptism, Promiscuous Baptism, and Promiscuous Fellowship, obscure the whole ground of observation, and make it utterly impossible to know where the demonstrative results of divine mercy are to be perceived. They are not to be found in worldly society ; this God himself forbids us to expect ; and when the Church is made to coincide with the world, they cannot be obtained in her. To look for "a Church within the Church" is impracticable, since every member of the Church will claim the credit of sincerity. By this whole system, therefore, in all its modifications, the actual results of redeeming mercy are obscured, and thereby the power of resisting infidelity is weakened beyond all calculation.

Refined speculations have but little influence over society ; common men are ruled by common sense. Some cannot, and others will not, labour through successive proofs, united in a chain of abstract reasoning ; but facts are appreciated by all. Hence the heathens have often been disgusted with Christianity, because their experience of Christians has filled them with abhorrence. It promises them mercy, and peace : but those who are recognized as Christians, have brought them cruelty,

and war, and every evil work. By this fact too, we may account for the growing infidelity of the lower classes in England. A most unrighteous and undignified compulsion forces from them an exorbitant support, for ceremonies to which no benefit can be traced ; and thus christianity becomes to them a means of oppressive suffering ; and its merciful design is never verified, in conjunction with these evils. The same may be affirmed of our higher and literary circles. To them the Church appears to be a mass of persons, differing in nothing, but their profession and dress, from other classes of the community. Her policies are as unsound, as unprincipled, and as cruel, as those which are adopted by other systems of governing mankind. God is no more revered in her sanctuary, than in the senate : and he ceases to be known, in her palaces, for a refuge. Our rulers, therefore, give no reverence to God on her account ; but feed her with wealth and flattery, and use her as an instrument of earthly power. Their zeal for her interest thus becomes united with gross irreligion, and often with a fixed infidelity ; for, in the Church, they see nothing to impress them with reverence for the authority and perfections of God.

By strictly adhering to the law of our Redeemer, we obtain precisely the opposite result. Then, none but accredited believers are baptized, and none are retained in the Church, after the profession of their faith is shown to have been insincere, or unsustained by a consistent deportment. Man cannot search the heart ; and therefore imperfections will attend the discipline entrusted to his care ; nevertheless the subjects of saving faith are distinguished ; and, where its profession has been assumed with insincerity, God himself will deal with the

deceiver. Thus, in wrath or love, God reveals himself, and verifies the principles of his government. Events, even now, transpire, evolving his perfections and his presence; which, if they were not concealed by corruptions or neglect of discipline, would speak most loudly and conclusively for God. But, if the attention of the Church were fixed on this one point, if this were carried out in all her polity, if she were known only as a company of believers, consecrated in baptism, and conforming to every dictate of divine law;—if the Church were known only as a sphere, in which faith in God is the only sustaining and regulating principle;—then God would be known in her, and through her, as a faithful God, and infidelity would be ashamed and confounded.

With all the imperfections that we have reason to confess, two facts nevertheless are evolved, in churches constituted on this principle, which awfully confirm the whole of our argument. First, where any clear and known deviations are allowed in such churches, they are generally visited with exemplary punishment. Individuals will be found, who, having abused the church by insincerity in their baptism, sink into the grossest villainy, and come to the most grievous end; and churches will be found, departing from the truth in points which are obvious to every impartial observer; but what is the result? They cannot linger, through a long and flattering course of error and rebellion. They bear the name of God; and its honour is vindicated; vindicated in their shame, if not in their annihilation. The churches of Rome, of Germany, of England, and many other Pædo-baptistical communities, have lived and grown in vices inconceivable; because they are, in fact, asso-

ciations of the world; a tithe of their pollutions and absurdities must have brought any community of persons, professing to be baptized believers, to utter extirpation.

Secondly, churches of baptized believers show the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God, in their preservation. Their history is full of sufferings and martyrdoms. No sooner had the primitive Christian churches borne their early persecutions, than the enemy began his work of corruption; and, instead of battering their walls, he cast his fire and filth into their sanctuary. When the churches became thoroughly polluted: then, by their own consent, their bulwarks were pulled down, and the fold was thrown open to the forest. Believers' baptism then became administered to unbelievers and to infants; all things being sacrificed to the love of earthly gain, or to the love of power. After the Reformation, a particular distinction was made, between baptism as administered to infants, and baptism as administered to adults. Thus delusions multiply as they advance: and gather strength from numbers. The terrible experiment of the Papacy, shows how far, and to what greatness, this sacramental forgery may proceed; and since its partial fall, every participant of her heresy has shown how much baptized believers have to bear in all society. They are courted and allured into every church: none will refuse them: yet are they scandalized by all. The time has never yet arrived, when they can live and teach without persecution. Classed with infidels, chartists, socinians, and whatever may serve to degrade them, the preservation of their existence has been a proof of constant divine care. In former times they had to bear the

greatest physical injury; in the present age, they have to bear the greatest moral injury. Men seem unable to discuss the truths that they teach, without impugning their character. Other men, professing Christianity, are opposed by the openly profane; but these are opposed by all classes, and every where have to endure the operations of a warfare aimed at their extirpation. Yet have they been preserved, and they have multiplied; and they are still multiplying, to an extent which exceeds all precedent since the Reformation. Every progression made, in diffusing sacred Scripture, and in promoting its careful study, turns to their enlargement and advantage. Wherever new weapons of warfare are sought, with which to assail them, they are sure to find fresh materials for their encouragement and support. If an appeal is made to Scripture, Scripture is on their side; if it be made to the Fathers, the Fathers supply additional support; if the appeal be made to experience, experience yields them its highest authority; and yet are they every where spoken against. They have been chastened of God, and despised of men; and what is the result? They have been preserved and multiplied in all adversity: and their discipline, preservation, and enlargement, are a witness for God upon the earth, a standing and experimental evidence of a divine revelation, and of a continued intercourse, thereby, between God and man.

Brethren, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." But what should be our special care, in this position, to which we have been called by infinite mercy? Shall we grow vain of our advantage, self-secure, and cease to learn the will of our Redeemer?

God forbid ! Ought we not rather to adore the love which hath distinguished us, rise to the elevation of our calling, and, (acting with vigour, and studying divine truth with teachable humility,) labour to attain the highest possible perfection, both in personal piety, and in the conduct of our churches ? In these things, be quite assured, that much is to be learnt ; and still more is to be acquired in practical observance. The great calamity of mankind, for ages, has been, that, while a gospel of salvation has been granted from heaven, no society has existed in which the full glory of its peaceful benefits could be seen. Let us labour, with all prayer, to supply this great *desideratum*, essential alike to the welfare of men, and the Saviour's glory.* Ponder this topic in your deepest thought : it is not of trivial importance. This great work, above all others, is intrusted to you. Nothing can be more honourable, and nothing can be more felicitous. Pursue the objects of your high and holy calling, as though the purposes of mercy were suspended on your own constancy and faithfulness. The Saviour, in whom you have confided, can never be unmindful of your work of faith, and labour of love. Here you may have much to discourage and afflict you ; but one expression of his kind approval, in the reign of heaven, will more than repay every disadvantage and trial that you have suffered amongst men.

Those who still remain opponents in this cause, will, I hope, receive this exposition of its merits in love, as it is presented. If the statements which have been advanced are wrong, let the error be explained ; and, when a satis-

* See Note M.

factory proof has been supplied, we will yield to them the victory. By all those endearments which raise, in their esteem, the honour of our Lord, the victory of the gospel, the salvation of mankind, and the spiritual interests of their own offspring, they will, (I trust,) be led to give to this subject their most prayerful consideration. This I ask of every opponent, and not without great solemnity; for the whole matter relates to the service and glory of our Redeemer, and of our God. How far these momentous interests are thereby affected, has been stated to them with much plainness of speech. They have seen the origin of their system, the failure of its supposed scriptural authority, and the law which Christ hath ordained for the regulation of his churches. These things have been set forth only in love, to them, as well as to others; and in the same spirit, I have now exemplified both the evils of their own theory, and the high advantage which a strict adherence to the Saviour's law must secure. Weighing these particulars, with prayerful and conscientious solicitude, each one will be prepared to determine for himself the path of duty. To supply these materials, necessary to an accurate judgment on the case, was my object; and, having now accomplished it, no farther tax upon your patience is required.

Here, therefore, Christian brethren, permit me to say, farewell. Be ye perfect, and of one mind, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. For your protracted and fixed attention during these discourses, receive my sincere thanks. Nor would I express these feelings less heartily to those who are still opponents, than to those who are with me on the side of truth. If

some feel that they are too exalted to *learn*, we are not responsible for their mistake : and it is too common a thing, to awaken much surprise. If there be those who can circulate through your families and town, controversial explanations of Holy Scripture, to which they dare not affix their own names ; and of which explanations they will not even listen to the answer, all the impropriety of their conduct must be accounted for by themselves. Our duty was to set the truth before them with plainness and affection. Should we have failed herein, the greatest favour we can ask is, to be instructed wherein we are wrong. I now commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. On this great cause of truth and of salvation, may blessings be imparted from on high, rich as the dew that falls on Hermon : and for ourselves, whatever the events that Providence may cause to transpire in our day, may our hearts be filled with that desire which Jesus has so clearly authorized, and so fully expressed,—“ Our Father ! let thy kingdom come, and “ thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven ! ”

N O T E S.



NOTES.

NOTE A.—page 25, line 24.

THE doctrine called the "*opus operatum*" cannot be made more plain than it is stated in the text. Since it was first introduced into the church, it has lurked in secret where it could not be openly avowed. It now operates in protestant churches rather as an undefined sentimental feeling, than as a principle which invites inquiry and dares disproof. All experience denies its validity, and yet it forms the basis of all ecclesiastical tyranny. Where it prevails, religious liberty, if it really exist, is insecure : and free inquiry is abhorred. Hence we may account for the angry feeling with which all who are implicated therein, unite to censure every impeachment of their common error. They can discuss amongst themselves and throw the blame upon each other, while each indicates a consciousness of priestly right to assert his own claim, as an agent in administering grace without faith in its recipient ; but, for any one to expose this false assumption, is an offence which neither party can forgive. In this we see the proof that they are wrong, for truth never fears exposure. The effect of this error is fatal in the extreme : for, the greatest obstacle in advancing personal religion in Christian countries, is presented in the almost universal feeling it produces, that, either by *birth* or by *baptism*, persons are Christians already ; and, though they have neither the faith of Christians, nor the fear of God before their eyes in any way, yet they cherish the hope that as Christians they shall be saved. In this mystery of error and sin, the people are destroyed while the combatants are, with mutual injustice, charging their own wrong upon each other.

NOTE B.—p. 34.

In the extemporaneous reference to this Charlinch case, either I have made a mistake or the reporter. The village of Charlinch is not in Devonshire, but Somersetshire. The author of the tract, who was silenced for his activity and evangelical faithfulness, states the case referred to in the following words.

“ A girl thirteen years old, having found the Lord one evening, passed the night in great blessedness : in the morning, she told her mother, how very full of joy she was : the mother, being then under deep conviction herself, shut up in unbelief, and just ready to doubt whether there were any such thing as *faith* at all, would not believe her, and bade her not tell stories ; to which the daughter replied, very solemnly—‘ mother, if *no one* will believe it, *God* believes it.’ Whilst under conviction, she was in the habit of going to a lady four times a week, to receive religious instruction : the lady being a strenuous defender of the views of Dr. Pusey, taught the child that she had been ‘ born again’ at her baptism. The girl continued to attend on her till she found the Lord, when she became fully convinced that she had never been ‘ born again’ before the Friday evening when she believed on Jesus : afterwards, having prayed to Christ to give her strength,—for it was no slight trial for the poor child,—she went to the lady, and, having thanked her for the trouble she had taken, told her that she was converted now, and that she could not come to her any more. To this the lady replied by telling her she was in great danger, and assuring her that she might be converted *fifty* times in the course of her life. The girl went to her no more. This dear child was formerly proud, intractable, and fond of dress : she is now becoming meek, gentle, submissive to her parents, and satisfied with plain attire. She was once a trouble to her mother ; but is now a comfort and support to her.”—*The Charlinch Revival*, pp. 30, 31.

I do not contend for the precise accuracy of either party in the use of technical and scriptural language as the case appears from this narrative. The probability is, that neither will be found correct. The phrase “ born again,” is obviously used instead of “ regenerate” or “ begotten again,” and this seems not to be detected by the author ; but the case is clearly to the point in hand. It shews with what a direct and horrible fatality the erroneous supposition that persons are regenerated in baptism may be brought to stifle the deepest convictions of sin, and to turn the whole thoughts of the inquirer, from Christ and his atonement, to the priest and his unauthorised and useless ceremony. Let it be remem-

bered that this process is going on in millions of cases every hour, and under the superintendence of priests, and parties, trained to this pernicious avocation, and the importance of our inquiry will be manifest to every one. It involves the whole question of personal piety, religious freedom, and the glory of our God in the salvation of men.

NOTE C.—p. 61.

The nature and origin of these errors are more fully set forth by Ireneus, in his work, *Adversus Hereses Valentini*, &c., and as the scene of Ireneus's labour was Lyons, in France, it will be seen how far the error had extended itself, and how seriously it was to be deplored. Tertullian's work on the same subject increases the evidence on these points, especially in reference to Africa. The wide diffusion of this error must be attributed greatly, to the want of general scriptural instruction; but the principal cause of its extension will be found in its suitability to our fallen condition. Men now, naturally, shun repentance and faith in Christ. Anything that seems to give a hope of salvation, without those acts of personal piety, is preferred, by the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Hence, therefore, we may see the heavy responsibility of Christians who consent to become implicated in this absurdity. It is compromising the whole question of dispute between God and the enemy of souls. It is resigning the church, to the kingdom of darkness, and to the man of sin.

NOTE D.—p. 61.

To show the near approach to identity in these two systems the following passages will be quite sufficient.

“ When then we find our Lord's direction to ‘ baptise all nations
 “ ‘ into the name (not names) of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY
 “ ‘ GHOST,’ a very little thoughtfulness, one would think, would lead
 “ men to connect with that name, which is ‘ a tower of strength,’
 “ which safely defends, wherein we have life, wherein we are safe,
 “ wherewith the Father keeps those whom He hath given to the
 “ Son, that they may be one as the Father and the Son are one;

“—accordingly, that being ‘baptized into the name’ of the three persons of the undivided Trinity, is no profession of obedience, sovereignty, belief, but (if one may so speak) a real appropriation of the person baptized to the HOLY TRINITY, a transfer of him from the dominion of Satan to Them, an insertion of him within Their blessed Name, and a casting the shield (to speak humanly) of that *Almighty* Name, over him; that name, at which devils tremble and are cast out thereby, ‘into which a man runneth ‘and is safe.’ And this so much the more, since Scripture elsewhere attributes the efficacy of Baptism to His all pervading Name, ‘but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were ‘justified in (*εν*) the name of the LORD JESUS, and by (*εν*) the ‘SPIRIT of our GOD’ (1 Cor. vi. 11); where ‘the name of our ‘LORD JESUS’ and ‘the SPIRIT of our GOD’ are mentioned, ‘as in the like way the efficacious causes of the holiness and righteousness imparted in Baptism. For where His Name is so named there is He.—*Oxford Tract* 67, pp. 72—73.

This is exactly what Valentine and Theodotus say on the same text and the same subject. Their words, as given in the lecture at page 60, are almost identical with the tract. “For he who is baptized into God hath migrated into God, and hath authority to walk over serpents and scorpions which are the evil powers; and it is enjoined, go about, and preach, and baptize those who believe, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, into whom we have been new born, being made superior to all other powers.”

The leading idea is, that of a material effect supposed to be produced by the ceremony, “*a real appropriation of the person baptized to the Holy Trinity,*” not a “*profession of obedience, sovereignty, belief, but a real appropriation of the person baptized to (? into) the Holy Trinity.*” This Valentine would call *migrating, passing over* into God. But this material notion is farther brought out by the Tractarians, in their remarks on Rom. vi. 1—13. In this exposition, the following appear to be quoted from Calvin on the word “*planted*” into Christ.

“Great is the emphasis of this word, and it clearly shows, that the Apostle is not merely exhorting, but is rather teaching us of the goodness of Christ. For he is not requiring any thing of us, which may be done by our zeal or industry, but sets forth a grafting-in, effected by the hand of God. For grafting-in implies not merely a conformity of life, but a secret union, whereby we become one with him; so that quickening us by His Spirit, He transfuses His power into us. So then, as the graft shares life and death with the tree into which it is grafted, so are we partakers of the Life no less than the Death of Christ.”—*Oxford Tract* 67, p. 109.

This quotation from Calvin is not only given with approval, but for the purpose of showing that he taught, and as the Tractarians think, taught properly, "That "Christ slays sin in those who are his' *from the effect of "Baptism.*"—Ibid, p. 108. Valentine says, "that the soul "comes forth from the baptism, a servant of God, and "speaks to the unclean spirit which now shudders at the "very person, into whom, but just before it would have "carried its operations."

Calvin, therefore, and the Tractarians are plainly implicated in the same error with Valentine and Theodotus. Indeed it is impossible to separate any theory of infant baptism from this delusive absurdity, without making it absolutely useless and unscriptural. In a moral sense, the believer is united to God in baptism, that is, he agrees in this solemn compact to live for God in Christ; but, the child has no faith, and, if he obtain any benefit, it must be material, and not moral, and thus it falls under the Valentinian heresy. The baptism of Christ was a personal and moral act, attended with moral results, Valentine gave it a material power of communicating life and strength to the soul. The Tractarians have applied to baptized infants the language and the ideas, both of Christ and of Valentine; and, those who would separate the error from the truth, must give up the baptism of infants altogether. If it be useless it is unscriptural, and if any benefit be assigned to it other than that which attends the compact and operation of faith, of which infants are destitute, then it must be material, and Valentinian, and not *Christian*.

NOTE E.—p. 65.

The improper use which has been made of the evidence to be obtained from Cyprian, is most marvellous. From one document, it is clear that Cyprian did permit a sickly child to be baptized; but it is also clear that this was not the ordinary rule; it was a deviation which he allowed because of the child's affliction. The same must be said of the mode; for sprinkling was allowed in the case of dying penitents, because they could not undergo immersion. Both the exceptions, therefore, prove the rule to have been, in his time, that of administering immersion to believers only. But the exceptions prove also the adherence of Cyprian to

the Valentinian error. The grace which he supposed to be conveyed in baptism, by the Spirit, was a kind of material essence, without which he affirmed that no one could be saved. It is not wonderful that papists should make much of this authority, it being the oldest which they have in the church ; but that protestant dissenters should appeal to it, is a clear proof that the error to which they cling, is, in their own estimation, destitute of all support from unpolluted authorities.

NOTE E.—p. 75.

“The assembly of divines having finished their main business, was reduced to a small number, most of the country ministers having returned home, and those who remained about London were employed chiefly in the examination of such ministers as presented themselves for ordination, or induction into livings ; thus they subsisted till February 22, 1648-9, about three weeks after the king’s death, having sat five years, six months, and twenty-two days, in which time they had one thousand, one hundred and sixty-three sessions. They were afterwards changed into a committee for the purposes last-mentioned, and met every Thursday morning till March 25, 1652, when the long parliament being turned out of the house by Oliver Cromwell, they broke up without any formal dissolution.”—*Neale’s Hist. Puritans*, vol. ii. p. 504.

NOTE F.—p. 82.

Dr. Chalmers is amongst the most candid of the advocates for infant baptism in our day ; but his statements do not alter the fact, as exhibited in the text. In his 30th Lecture, (vol. ii. p. 64, of his work on the *Epistle to the Romans*,) he plainly affirms that “the original meaning of the word baptism is immersion,” and without doubt,

“That the prevalent style of the administration in the apostle’s days, was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water. Jesus Christ by death underwent this sort of baptism—even immersion under the surface of the ground, whence He soon emerged again by His resurrection. We by being baptized into his death, are conceived to have made a similar trans-

"lation—In the act of descending under the water of baptism
 "to have resigned an old life, and, in the act of ascending, to
 "emerge into a second, or a new life."—*Ibid*, vol. ii. p. 64.

This is stated to illustrate the argument of Paul, in Rom. vi. 3—7. Hence he admits that this passage relates to the ordinance of baptism in water, and this brings him under the full weight of my argument in the third lecture; where it is proved that this whole passage can be applied to baptized believers only. But in vol. i. of the same work, and at page 226, he states, what he calls, the main strength of the scriptural argument for infant baptism, in these words :—

1. "The first Christians believed and were baptized."
2. "Abraham believed and was circumcised."
3. "He transmitted the practice of circumcision to infants."
4. "We transmit the practice of baptism to infants."
5. "There is no satisfactory historical evidence of our practice
 "having ever crept in,—the innovation of a later period in the
 "history of the church."—*Ibid*, vol. i. p. 226.

To all this it is replied :—

1. That I have shown in this Lecture, when, and how, this practice did creep in as a new thing,—in the time, and by the aid of Cyprian and Valentine.

2. In my third lecture, it is shown that the passage, Rom. vi. 1—13, excludes the idea of any baptism in the first age, but that which was administered to professed believers.

3. The analogy between circumcision and baptism, as far as it goes, supports this doctrine. For Abraham circumcised his children because they were Jews by birth, and as such had an inheritance in the covenant made with him and his posterity. But the natural children of believers are *not* believers by birth, and have *not* by birth, *any* inheritance in the new covenant. Those who believe are a seed of faithful Abraham, and sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus; such, therefore, should, by the analogy, be baptized, and *only* such: it is to such only that the whole argument of the apostle will apply, and it is to such only that Dr. Chalmers's exposition of the apostle's argument can apply. Dr. Chalmers effectually contradicts himself; and, his failure is a clear proof that this argument for infant baptism cannot be sustained. If it rest on anything, it must be on the assumption of hereditary piety, which, in a work on that subject, I have considered and rejected. His "*main strength of the scriptural argument for infant baptism*," therefore, is destroyed; and, if the practice be retained, it must be retained without any scriptural support whatever. Besides, there can be no doubt whatever, that the expecta-

tion of "*a spiritual gift in baptism*" is the great, though the unavowed cause of that general and diseased regard for infant baptism which now prevails in that and in other churches.

NOTE G.—p. 87.

That the opinion here expressed is not without foundation may be seen from the following extract.

(COPY.)

"THE REGISTRATION ACT."

"To the Editor of the *Times*."

"SIR,—Permit me to direct your attention to a matter of momentous import to the Christian community, and of no inconsiderable importance as affecting the interests of the established church. I mean the Registration Act, which is effecting more to unchristianise the land, and to promote dissent, infidelity, and estrangement from the church of Christ, than the combined machinations of Chartists, Socialists, Dissenters, and Infidels."—"In populous districts, where Dissenters have been appointed to a very great extent as registrars, the people have been generally told 'that they will register their children, and that it will not be necessary for them to be baptized.' And such is the extreme ignorance of thousands as to religious matters, that credence is given to such representations; and numbers, to an extent even beyond conception, in every populous parish, are prevented from participating in the blessings and privileges of Christian baptism, although this sacrament was submitted to by Christ himself, was appointed as an initiation into his church, and we are expressly told by him, that unless 'a person believes, and is baptized, he cannot be saved.'

"That the evils arising from the Registration Act are not imaginary, the following tabular statement of the number of baptisms in one populous parish, viz., the parish of Bethnal-green, for the three years preceding the Registration Act, compared with the first three years since its enactment, will clearly show:—

Baptisms in 1835	..	849	Baptisms in 1838	..	670
" 1836	..	836	" 1839	..	691
" 1837	..	1131	" 1840	..	684
		<hr/>			<hr/>
		2816			2045
		2816			
		2045			

3) 771 less in three years.

257, less each year.

“ Here, then, we have in one parish alone a decrease in the number of baptisms to the extent of 257 each year, although the parish has increased in population about 10,000 since 1835, and there ought to have been an increase of baptisms in a similar ratio. Surely, it is high time for the Legislature to apply a remedy to such an alarming evil as this ; and it is to be hoped, that should you direct the attention of a Christian Legislature to this momentous subject, some friend of the present as well as future well-being of his Christian brethren would be induced to originate an act to repeal a measure so injurious to the church and subversive of Christianity ; and which, unless repealed, may bring down the just judgments of God upon the land.

“ Had it been proposed to grant the clergy one-tenth of the sum for registration which is paid to lay Dissenting registrars, the tender consciences of Dissenters would have been so deeply wounded that the kingdom would have been in a state of commotion from one extremity to the other ; but as the rural clergy were to be robbed of a fourth of their property by the Tithe Commutation Act, the still worse paid clergy in towns were to be robbed of a considerable portion of their fees by the Registration Act. This was consistent enough in an Administration governed by popular clamour, and hostilely disposed towards the church ; but surely the time is not far distant when, under a different Administration, the country will be extricated from the disgrace and injustice of both enactments—when the ministers of Christ will be again empowered to receive what God ordained for their maintenance ; and the awful responsibility be averted of a Christian Legislature unchristianizing the land.”

This passage is of great importance. It shows, more clearly than the document quoted in the text, what is the true cause of this baptismal regeneration activity. The clergy are—“ *to be robbed of a considerable portion of their fees by the Registration Act.*” To prevent this loss of fees is the object of their zeal, and therefore they cry up the importance of their ceremony. Empiricism cannot be carried farther in vending Morrison’s pills. But there is a still deeper policy included in this arrangement. The legal importance of registers, is felt through life ; and, when these come to be connected with religious services, they raise the importance of the church in the estimation of the people. It was from the first considered, that the separation of these from church acts and ceremonies, was a great point gained. It is right that civil affairs should be made distinct. The religious ceremonies will then be made dependant on their own merits : and, when their unfounded and useless character comes to be seen and contrasted with the meretricious assumptions made in their favour, by those who advocate them, they will be rejected with just indig-

nation : but, if the people will not inquire for themselves, and numbers still adhere to these fruitless and unscriptural ceremonies, then, priestly power will rise up in the darkness—and hence it is found, in all experience, that infant baptism and religious liberty cannot generally prevail at the same time and in the same country. Without violent protection infant baptism must perish ; and the violent protection it requires, is incompatible with religious liberty.

NOTE H.—p. 91.

I have been threatened with I know not what for the foregoing quotation. It was reported in the *Essex Herald* as stated in the text : and some who undertook to defend his lordship were pleased to implicate my veracity in the matter. This led me to examine the different editions of this charge, and I have been surprised to find in how many cases the seventh edition differs from the original reports. The charge at first was obviously intended for the clergy : and, if our habits as a nation would have allowed it, should have been delivered with closed doors. The charge as printed and issued with the Bishop's name to it, is more suited to the people, and has less in it to violate the feelings of the age. The whole passage relating to marriage is left out, and instead of it the following note is appended to page 40.

“ NOTE [R]. At this part of the charge I made some observations respecting the marriage, by clergymen, according to the
 “ rites of the church, of parties who have already contracted a
 “ valid marriage before the Superintendent Registrar. It appeared
 “ to me that such a proceeding was irregular ; that the banns, in
 “ such a case, could not be correctly published ; and that a licence,
 “ which is a dispensation for banns, could not be granted ; and
 “ that if the proceedings were allowable in the case specified, it
 “ would be also in all cases of Dissenter's marriages solemnized by
 “ any other person than a clergyman. I am still inclined to this
 “ view of the subject ; but I have had pointed out to me a form
 “ of licence for such re-marriage, prepared by the master of the
 “ faculties, and printed in Dr. Phillimore's late Edition of Burn's
 “ *Ecclesiastical Law*, vol. ii. pp. 433, 99 ; and I therefore suspend
 “ my judgment upon the question, till I shall have had an opportunity of further inquiry and consideration.”—*Charge delivered by the Lord Bishop of London, 1842. Seventh Edition, page 40, Note R.*

From this note it appears therefore that the reported passage is correct, and his lordship hesitates not whether he shall insinuate that the marriages under the new act are adulterous connexions, but whether he shall sanction new marriages in such cases. He is hesitating whether he in his church, "as by law established," shall act contrary to the law of the land. The case too is one which shows the exact point of solicitude on which this hesitation rests. The Marriage Act, is not intended to enforce a marriage without any religious service ; it is merely intended to empower such as wish it, to register their marriages without violating their consciences in a religious ceremony which they do not approve. The Act is constructed with a most kind regard to the feelings and rights of the people. Parties can hold their religious services at home before or after the registration at the office, as they please, or they can have the registrar present in a registered place of worship, and the registration then takes place at the very time of the service. This safe registration is all that government asks in protecting the marriage, and the government has no right to interfere any farther. The parties are therefore permitted to use their own ministers or what ceremony they think proper. It is this concession to religious liberty which grieves the bishop and his clergy. They would give no registration to individuals, no marriage to households, no coronation to royalty, no appointment to office without their interference. Their sacramental empiricism must be mingled with all that is done in civil life, that the church may be all in all. Hence we may see how extensively pernicious in its operation that principle is with which we have to deal in this controversy. It poisons all healthy existence, social and moral. When once it has been introduced by infant baptism, no limit can be assigned to its baneful effects. The subject of that priestly power which it generates and feeds, is incapable of being satisfied with less than sitting in the senate, and in the temple of God, as though he were God : and popery itself, has yet but imperfectly shown how great the injustice, darkness, and misery are, to which its victims must be subjected. From the character of this note, therefore, as well as from the nature of the whole subject, I am unable to withhold the censure which is expressed in the text.

NOTE I.—p. 138.

The great body of evidence on which this statement is made cannot be condensed within the limit of this note. The reader will find so much respecting the Sabian sect in the works of Michaelis, especially in his *Introduction to the New Testament, translated by Marsh*, vol. iv. p. 285—302, that it will be better for him to read these two sections for himself. He will there find that the Sabian error prevailed in Ephesus, not only in the time of Paul, but that the apostle John in writing his Gospel, had the refutation of their heresy in view. There can be no doubt of its existence then, and at far more recent periods, if not at the present day. From first knowing only the baptism of John, and joining his instructions with the Gnostic system of learning, the Sabians came to make him superior to Christ and fell into numberless absurdities. While John lived, and before Christ had risen to his Glory, it was quite right, and quite sufficient, for every believer in the coming reign of God, to receive the prospective baptism, which was administered both by John and the disciples of our Lord ; but, when Christ had risen to his glory, when all power in heaven and in earth had been given to him as the Mediatorial King, and when the reign of heaven had really begun, it was no longer lawful to receive, or to administer, a *prospective* baptism. No other Saviour was to be expected. Every believer in the reign of heaven must then be baptized into Christ, the present exalted King in Zion ; and, the particular care with which Paul demands the rebaptism of these disciples, shows how precisely, in his day, *the proper administration* of baptism was made a term of church fellowship, and a condition on which the miraculous gift, or, *the baptism*, of the Holy Spirit was dependent. The case of Cornelius, being an exception, made by direct Divine interference, to extend the gospel to heathens as well as Jews, confirms this rule. Converts to the truth were first baptized in water, and then baptized in the Holy Ghost. Acts xix. 1—7 ; i. 5 ; and ii. 37—40.

NOTE K.—p. 145.

I call this a "*sentimental influence*," because the attachment to this ceremony on the part of the people, is one

for which no rational cause can be assigned. The advocates of infant baptism do also pay a most unaccountable regard to this feeling in the people, though they nevertheless, in many instances, cannot respect it. The Independents fall under this remark, to an extent which is greatly to be deplored. The fact that they hold up the whole question to contempt, proves this; for if any good authority could be given for the practice, or if any real good, besides the gratification of this sentimental attachment to the ceremony, could be traced to it, the question respecting a right administration of the ordinance could not be contemptible. Besides, the habit of mutual annihilation which prevails in the Independent advocates of infant baptism, affords a still stronger proof that their position is absolutely untenable. What one affirms, another is sure to contradict. They agree in nothing but the dread of free discussion, and a direct appeal to Holy Scripture. An apology may be found for their periodicals, because their conductors have to lick the surface of so many things, that to understand any one thing perfectly would require in them something more than mortal. But private authors are expected to be more substantial, if not profound; and yet the agitation with which they reprehend and censure every attempt to bring them to the tribunal of Holy Scripture, is greatly to be deplored. If I loved my brethren less, I should feel this less severely; but that men who live so much in the light of truth should have any one point to which they fear its application, must ever claim our grief. If these lines should ever reach their observation, I entreat them to consider, that, by indulging this dread of truth, they are hazarding the whole interests of personal religion. If the thing be of no moment, why, for so contemptible a thing, do they make so terrible a sacrifice? They complain bitterly, I know, but however this may be regretted, it is no good reason, why, under such circumstances, the statements in the text should be withdrawn. In the evils which attend this heresy, and its defence, my brethren are implicated; and it is not too much to ask of them that such evils may be considered.

NOTE L.—p. 169.

Many things conspire to make the case of evangelical churchmen extremely delicate. The extent to which such

persons believe, at least, in the ancient practice of believers' baptism, and the numerous indications that such was the first practice of their own church, ought to remind them that other corruptions have multiplied in their society, just in proportion to the extent of their departure from this ancient and scriptural practice. The feeling of society ought not to be considered at any time in opposition to the law of Christ; much less in a case where so many interests are involved. Already one-third of the clergy have gone over to the tractmen; and the celebrated sermon of Dr. Pusey, their organ, is said to have been read by a catholic priest, in Birmingham, as a true statement of Roman Catholic doctrine respecting the sacraments. In this Hierarchy, therefore, now, Christ is exalted in words, as our only hope; that the sacraments may become more important to the people as the means of communicating his benefits and person. This also has a further aim, for, by exalting the sacramental ceremonies, the clergy exalt themselves as the only ordained administrators of sacramental grace. Such a church, trembling at the truth, and coquetting with the world, and scornful in her self-sufficiency, can be no fit place for a good man. Fellowship in such follies can bring no honour to the holy Saviour.

NOTE M.—p. 212.

The great effort of our opponents has been to show that John iii. 3-5; John i. 12; Rom. vi. 1-13; Gal. iii. 26, 29; Col. ii. 11; and Titus iii. 4-7; with other passages of like kind, do not refer to water baptism, but to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. To this areply would be difficult, if we had not the clear statement of Acts i. 4-5. Our Lord there saith, "*John truly baptized you in water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit, not many days hence.*" Hence, therefore, we learn that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not the first production of spiritual life, or regeneration, nor the act of conversion which takes place when a regenerated sinner turns from the world, and sin, to God; but it is the operation of the Holy Spirit which occurred on the pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, and all such bounteous outpourings of the Spirit on devoted and baptized believers, in times that have followed. (*See Note I.*) With this in view, no one will

be at a loss to maintain this great controversy. But let the Baptist brethren be reminded, that men will be more convinced by one example than by ten thousand words. Let ministers, deacons, and the baptized Christians under their care, labour therefore, with all prayer and constancy, to set before the other denominations as perfect an example of obedience to the law of Christ as possible. Labour that no expression of the Lord's will may escape your notice, and that everything you know of His will may be observed with the extreme of decorum ; for if you can but show in experience, and practice, what Christ intended and ordained, be quite sure that the result will both convince others, and reward you.

TO BE OBTAINED OF
HOULSTON & STONEMAN, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND OF ANY OTHER BOOKSELLER.

~~~~~  
WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.  
~~~~~

I.

HINTS ON THE REGULATION OF CHRISTIAN
CHURCHES. 12mo. 3s. 6d.

"A careful examination of this work has served to convince us that it is a most valuable addition to the stores of Non-conforming Theology. . . . It is well written, and displays considerable mental power: and hence we have much pleasure in giving it our warm and conscientious approbation.—*Congregational Magazine*.

"We thank Mr. Stovel for the volume before us. These Hints are the production of a sound and independent mind, guided in its inquiries by the Word of God alone . . . We can assure our readers that they will find the work most amply repaying an attentive perusal."—*Baptist Magazine*.

II.

PASTORAL APPEALS ON CONVERSION.

18mo. 2s. 6d.

"We know not which to admire most, the excellent object of the writer, or the deep piety with which his volume is imbued:—it displays an intimate acquaintance with the workings of the human mind, and the operations of religious principles; and cannot be attentively perused without benefit. We cordially recommend it to the immediate attention of our readers."—*Eclectic Review*, March, 1837.

"It is filled with scriptural sentiment and searching appeals."—*Ward's Miscellany*, vol. i. p. 287.

"It is as direct in its appeals as 'Baxter's Call.'"—*Evangelical Magazine*, March, 1837.

III.

THE DREADFUL REQUISITION. 18mo. 1s. 6d.

"A more urgent appeal to Christians to strive for the salvation of their fellow-men we have never read."—*Evangelical Magazine*, June, 1837.

"It is worthy of its great subject, and has our cordial commendation."—*Ward's Miscellany*, vol. i. p. 283.

IV.

HUMBLE BENEVOLENCE EXEMPLIFIED AND
REWARDED, IN THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAW-
CROFT. 18mo. 4*d*.

Fourth Thousand—enlarg ed.

V.

LETTER TO LORD HENLEY ON CHURCH REFORM.
8vo. 2*s*. 6*d*.

VI.

POPERY IN ENGLAND. IN FIVE LECTURES. 2*s*. 6*d*.

“ This is a little volume of great merit. Catholics and Pro-
testants of every class may read it with advantage.”—*Revivalist*,
Feb. 1840. p. 70.

“ Having read them ourselves, we are glad to find that we are
able to join our judicious and right-hearted friend, in calling them
‘ valuable Lectures.’ ”—*Methodist Magazine*, *Feb*. 1840, p. 153,
and p. 142.

VII.

LETTER ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. Price 2*d*.

VIII.

SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS ON HOLY BAPTISM.
Price 2*d*.

IX.

PUSEYISM, OR THE BAPTISMAL REGENERATION
CONTROVERSY CONSIDERED, IN FIVE LEC-
TURES. Second Edition. Price 6*s*.

“ These Lectures must rank unquestionably with the very best
publications on the subject in our language.”—*Primitive Church
Magazine*, *August*, 1843. p. 281.

